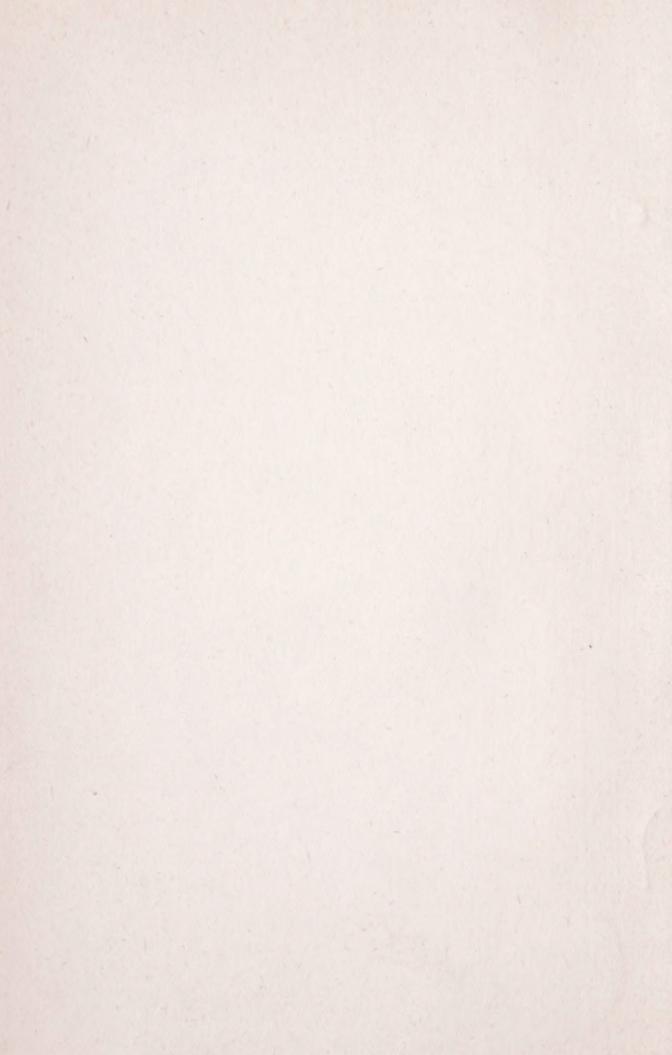


UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







HAROLD GODWIN.

A SOCIAL SATIRE

BY

W. DE HUGER.

Daniel E. H. Kilkinson.

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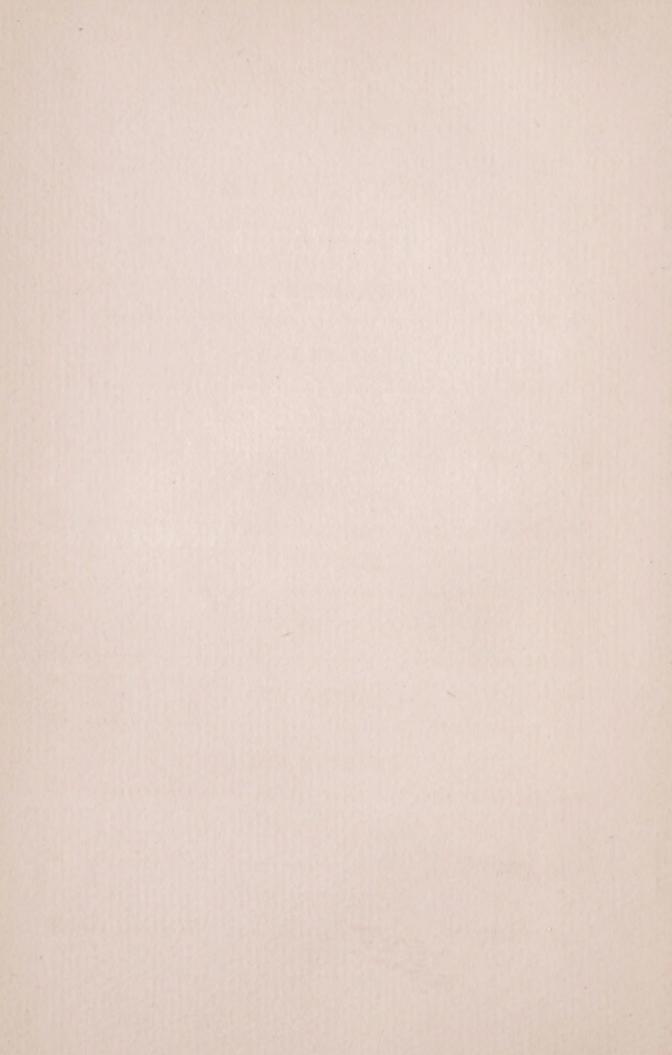
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PREFACE

THE author submits the facts of this modern story, substantially as they have come to him, from the narrative of many living witnesses, and correspondence still in the possession of "Pauline;" and without alteration, or embellishment, they are gathered together in these pages and submitted.

THE AUTHOR.



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HAROLD GODWIN

CHAPTER I

SUB NUBIBUS

"John, where is the young master?"

"I don't know, Mr. Larkins; nobody ever knows where the young master is. We got a telegram from him that he would be here to-night or to-morrow night, but he might change his mind you know, and not be here for a month."

"John," resumed Mr. Larkins, "you have been a very faithful servant to the Godwin family; your youth was spent in the service of the elder Godwin and now you devote your life to the service of the younger."

"Yes, Mr. Larkins, the young master is the apple of my eye. I used to carry him in my arms when he was nothing but a baby. He is the finest, noblest gentleman that ever lived and when he is out of my sight I am never happy. I would be with him now if I only knew where he is. Nothing but death will ever end the service I owe him."

"In return for your confidence, John, I will tell you that young Mr. Godwin's affairs are in a very bad shape, and that the magnificent estates, including this valuable mansion, with its demesnes, are all about to be swallowed up by enormous expenditures and mortgages."

"Is that so? Well, it don't make any difference. Whatever Mr. Harold does is right. I know he don't care anything about expenses and he'd just as soon give away a mansion as a barn. It is his and he has a right to do as he pleases with it, and as long as he don't drive me away from him, but will let me follow his footsteps,

I am happy and content."

The speakers in the above dialogue were standing in front of a mansion, palatial in size, and magnificent in its appointments. From the top of the broad and lofty marble steps on which they stood, an unsurpassed view of the Potomac river was presented. Autumn had already begun to paint with varied colors the foliage of the forest, and the descending sun sent its declining rays tranquilly along the broad bosom of the placid river below.

Larkins stood gazing at the lovely scene as he remarked, "The beautiful tinge of autumn is the fore-runner of the death of winter. Thus gracefully does Nature protect her children from the asperity of her own inexorable laws; even the coming of death is made graceful and inviting by the gorgeous hues of evanescent life." And with a parting salutation he strode away.

CHAPTER II

SUB ROSA

Mr. Godwin had arrived at home. The young, the fair, the beautiful, had come with him. The great mansion was ablaze with lights from foundation to turret. Well trained servants passed and repassed along the halls and stairways. The numerous guest rooms exhaled the odors of the terrestrial fair. The rustle of silks and satins, echoes of suppressed laughter and sweet whispers, were the sprites that traveled with the pleasant waves of sound through the gala corridors; also might be heard now and then bars from some opera, broken upon by laughter fully as musical and sweet, and strains from a stringed instrument throbbing its harmonies of suppressed emotion. The atmosphere was redolent with sweet intoxicating suggestions more warm and sensuous than the aromatic gales that blow from the coasts of Arabia.

In one of the suites that bordered on this fragrantscented ambulatory, might be seen at this time a vision of wondrous beauty. Reclining nonchalantly in a somewhat high chair, a wealth of golden hair fell in lustrous wavelets from her shoulders, and as her maid, who was engaged in brushing and arranging it, turned and re-turned the lovely masses, a thousand varying hues glanced in the changing light with every delicate angle of incidence.

"Aimee," she said to her maid, "I wonder why Harold does not come. He always says I am lovely in

deshabille."

"I don't know, mademoiselle, but I notice he has not visited your private apartments since we came."

"So have I noticed it. I suppose it is some notion, some singular idea, that is controlling him. Perhaps it is some picture in this room that has some peculiar reverence in his estimation that precludes the display of any levity in its presence."

"Maybe it's some recollection," suggested Aimee.
"This, they say, is his old home, built by his fathers and his forefathers, and Mr. Harold has such queer notions of propriety, even with you, the Aphrodite."

"Propriety! humph," with an expressive shrug of the beautiful pink shoulders and a lovely pouting of lips, "what has propriety to do with the rich, the young and the gay? Let age ape propriety, for fear of the next world, let poverty practice it because it is cheap and convenient, but give me life's pleasures now, without the stint of propriety; let art, a delicate and well bred sense of refinement, be the only limits to present enjoyment. Say, Aimee, I wish Harold loved me onetenth as much as I do him. I'd just give half of my life for the bargain."

"Maybe he does," answered Aimee.

"No," replied Aphrodite, "he doesn't. He loves too many and all at one time. He is sweet and pleasant to every one of them."

"He is sweet and pleasant to everybody," said Aimee

softly.

Aphrodite's brown eyes flashed fire as she said, "I suppose you are in love with him too."

'Oh," lightly laughed Aimee, "Mr. Harold would

scarcely look at me."

"Oh, yes he would," snapped Aphrodite, looking closely at her companion. "You are young and pretty, and what's more, innocent, and these three things are valuable gems in his eyes."

"Mademoiselle will not be angry with me or look so cross at me. I did not say anything. Mr. Harold loves

you, the beautiful Aphrodite, and so do I."
"I believe you do," and the haughty beauty relented

and put her arm around the girl's neck and kissed her; the next moment her head was on the girl's breast and bright pearly tears were dropping from the long eyelashes.

"Forgive me, Aimee, my miserable impulses made

me jealous and rude to you."

"Heavens! Mademoiselle, these tears will ruin your eyes! the fete will soon be ready and you must be queen of the gay. Heavens! "and the girl wrung her hands in unfeigned dismay, for it was the pride of her existence to perfect by every delicate touch and detail the dress and finish of her mistress.

"That's true," said Aphrodite, "Aimee, you are a treasure. Tears have no place with the gay. Aimee, another glass of Chartreuse. Thanks. Kiss me, sweetheart." And she broke into song, clear, rippling and sweet as the tunes Ulysses heard on the Island of

Circe.

"I love the merry sunshine bright, The silvery moon, with mellow light, Each every star, with hopeful ray, That bids the traveler on his way. All these I love, with every sight. But, oh! I dread the dreary night.

Drive night away, drive night away, With festive torch the monster slay, 'Till day doth come with piercing ray And frights him from our world away. I love the day with joyous light, But, oh! I dread the dreary night."

"Oh! what a lovely song," said Aimee. "So much like your own bright nature. But, Mademoiselle, par-

don me, whence comes your name Aphrodite?"
"My name, child?" answered Aphrodite. course, you must know that like the mythical Aphrodite of old, I was found an infant floating on the waves of the sea. My parents perished in the shipwreck and I alone was left. My noble rescuer and subsequent guardian, now long deceased, gave me the name."

"How strange," said Aimee.

"My venerated guardian," continued Aphrodite, "gave me every opportunity of travel and a generous education. He also carefully invested my own large inheritance, and added thereto his great wealth at his lamented death."

"Wonderful," replied Aimee.

A light tap at the door intercepted further conversa-

tion, and there entered a perfect bevy of beauties.

"Why, Pauline! how radiant you look shimmering in green like the fairest daughter of Neptune," cried Aphrodite, "and you, Emile, blushing in your red costume, you look as if your dressmaker had visited the Salamanders and borrowed some of their occult carmine for you, and you, oh Natalie! the groves of Florida have been distilled of their colors to achieve the perfect orange of your raiment, and behold here comes another, and another vision of beauty," she continued, as more beauties entered the apartment. "Welcome, all of you, goddesses all of you, sparkling stars in the constellation of beauty, I know New York is dark to-night without you.

"But, Aimee, how can I vie with these?" turning

haughtily to her maid.

"You will be queen of all," said the maid seriously.
"Yes, Aimee is right," said Pauline gaily, "you,
Aphrodite, will be the queen of all."

"I don't know," pouted Aphrodite, good humoredly,

"you are all sparkling with diamonds."

"So will you," said Aimee gently, and then sotto voce, "you will wear the diamond tiara Mr. Harold gave you."

"And what's to be the programme of the hour?" in-

quired Pauline.

"I don't know," said Aphrodite, "I haven't seen Harold since he handed me from my carriage; but I suppose the usual perpetual round of splendid and delicious pleasures—only more splendid and more de-

licious than ever before-because Harold delights in

novelty in the art of pleasure."

"Perry Delnot tells me," said Pauline, "that our band of blind musicians is here, so that means a Subrosial dance."

"Grand! Grand" exclaimed Aphrodite, "remember the last at our Newport cottage last summer, wasn't that glorious?"

"Yes," said Emile, "when our little English duke was there."

"Wasn't he a hun," said Pauline, "when after supper he pirouetted on his silk hat and declared the eternal supremacy of America in all things?"

"I remember," said Emile laughing, "when he said the Argyle and the Jardin Mabille-that London and

Paris were not in it."

"I should say not," said Aphrodite, "such things are in the ordinary experience of human events. The Subrosial Association is not the product of ordinary circumstances. Our bond of union is love and the love of pleasure, not the vulgar sentiments of avarice or curiosity. Our queens might, had they chosen, have reigned in the legitimate spheres of usual society, in the ballroom and at the domestic hearth—but beauty, art, mad pleasure, have called, and we are the devotees of gaiety and love. We of a modern and advanced age have created a world of sumptuous enjoyment of our own, and call it, do we not, the Subrosial?"

"Yes, said Pauline, "it is your extraordinary genius for organization and love of pleasure, that has discovered each member and woven around all the silken bonds of the Subrosial Society whose intoxicating pleasures fill us with delight and you know sometimes

with rhapsody."

"Why," said Aphrodite, "should women be deprived of the equal privileges and enjoyments of men? Young men of our means and situation are not denied such entertainment as they seek, and we too propose to have

and do have the modern enjoyments of women as they like it, in the mode, manner and style we see fit. Isn't that right?"

All echoed assent.

Said Pauline, "The modern woman of limited means is allowed to drudge side by side with men in factories and workshops, offices and clerkships; and we too as modern women of fashion and wealth claim to exercise our rights as independent women, yet side by side with our necessary partners in pleasure, in just such gay and extravagant dissipation as our tastes and desires may indicate. And whose concern is it?" And she turned inquiringly to her fair sisters.
"No one's," was echoed in answer.

"Why, Pauline," said Aphrodite, "you speak like a philosopher, like Aspasia, indeed, who long ago asserted woman's right to be as happy as man, and who by her own illustrious example made plain that virtue was not absolutely essential to female happiness, but occasionally a detriment."

"Yes," said Pauline, "the glory of Aspasia survives even the slips of virtue and there is a wide difference between hideous vice and gorgeous, delicious, elegant

pleasure."

CHAPTER III

BEFORE DINNER

"This is indeed a lovely place, Perry."

"Yes," replied Delnot, "the wealth of many generations evidently contributed its quota unstintingly to the erection and finish of this palace; don't you think it deserves the distinction of that title, Warren?"

"It certainly excels in extent and appointments many of the denominated palaces of Europe," replied

Warren.

"The great monuments of architecture are the legitimate product of not one but many ages, as our old professor used to inculcate, and it requires concentrated wealth for generations in the hands of the same family, or at least successive proprietors of equal taste and culture, to produce the real palace."

"You do not mean to discount as impossible those splendid piles constructed and being constructed at the present time in New York and elsewhere, do you?"

"Yes, as final results I do, under the rule. The mellow tint of protracted time is necessary to the grand final perfection of architecture. It is the blending of the mortal and the immortal, the ephemeral and eternal, the solemn past and the dignified present, that sheds a halo upon such structures, and these colors the gradual hand of time alone dispenses on the handiwork of man; man may build but time must ripen into color and effect."

"I believe you are right," assented Warren, "but will you gainsay America's ultimate destiny in architecture?"

"By no means," replied Delnot, "accept these great

accomplishments as the first modern step, and to these magnificent and stupendous structures with the progress of time and the accumulation of wealth, others more magnificent and stupendous, pile Pelion on Ossa in splendid and magnificent adjustment, and you have an idea of what America may do in the history of architecture in the future. The palaces of the Vanderbilts, Huntingtons, Rockefellers, the Morgans and others, are but the beginning of the destiny of architecture in America as a distinct type; and even as our beloved country has overshadowed all others in the design and practice of public philosophy or government, so should it, in obedience to the extraordinary surrounding conditions of development, give an adequate and overshadowing expression of its history and achievements, beyond

all others, in the enduring monuments of architecture."
"My dear friend," said Warren, "your patriotism is confident and exalting. You well deserve your recent success in your candidacy for congress. The grave duties of a legislator will, I know, be nobly discharged

by you."
"Thanks, Warren."

The young men, for both of them were young, were seated in one of the salons of the great mansion. not was of medium height, with high forehead, frank, earnest expression, and large brown eyes, which could be soft or severe as occasion required. Warren was not so dark in complexion as his companion, a size larger in stature, and a person of most pleasing address and manner.

"Ah! here come our other friends," said Warren, as a party of gentlemen entered the apartment and soon formed a group extending congratulations and compliments.

Harold Godwin, as he stood among his gay friends and guests, was the embodiment of ease, grace and natural elegance.

"I often think of the Apollo Belvidere when I see

Harold Godwin in his wonderful perfection of classic face and figure," said Delnot to Warren.

The two had just then resumed their seats, a little

retired from the rest of the company.

"Yes," said Warren, "his features are essentially classic, and while they are clear cut and well defined, there is something indefinable about the contour that makes the lines melt into curves."

"That indefinable something of which you speak is undoubtedly the everlasting 'harmony' of the ancients that gives modulation and life even to the chiseled

features of marble," replied Delnot.

"No wonder the women adore him," said Warren.

"In so doing, they cannot be criticized for not exercising the most exquisite artistic taste," answered Delnot. "He is just my idea of a perfect figure. Tall, without seeming tall except by contrast with others, and the same elegant symmetry gives his every movement an equipoise that is full of grace and natural dignity."

"Why, Delnot, you ought to have been an artist as

well as a statesman."

"Thank you, Warren, but I am not alone in my

ardent admiration of our host."

"No indeed, but your excellent discrimination analyzes, and diction describes, what we, his friends, delight in, and the world extols."

CHAPTER IV

THE BANQUET

OH! it was a brilliant affair, that banquet. Sparkling, flashing, scintillating beyond adequate description. Orion and Scorpion combined never glittered like the silver, gold and glass of that festive board. Gorgeous flowers and fragrant fruits gave varied color and effect to the substance of sumptuous viands. The smoking flesh of wild game attested sacrifice to the Goddess of the Chase. Liquids of varied hues and ancient vintage were offered libations to the immortal Bacchus. Ceres was propitiated in pearly vegetables and sheaves of tender green; Neptune had brought upon his trident the succulent flesh of the Cavalle; gems and diamonds flashed in the coiffures of the ladies; and from all, from the assembled youth and beauty of nature arose an intoxicating incense to the adorable Goddess of Creation.

Such were the thoughts transpiring in the mind of the intellectual Delnot as he gazed upon the scene,

wrapped in a delicious reverie.

"Come, wake up, Delnot. Why so silent, my orator. You whose flexible perceptions alone can discriminate the good and beautiful even through its more questionable environments?" Thus spoke Aphrodite from her seat of distinction beside Harold.

"I am silent because sometimes silence is golden, as the old adage says. I was drinking in this beautiful

scene."

"As usual, the poet and philosopher is selfish himself, while he denounces the selfishness of others. You withdraw your own radiance that you may be a lookeron at the radiance of others. It will never do, my friend. Pauline, Emile, bedew those flowers with the sparkling essence of wine and attar of roses, and decorate his brows with preliminary coronation, the laurels will wait."

"Well," replied Delnot, aroused, "I will give you a question to solve. Which is the greater gift, a really magnificent voice like that of Pauline or Patti; or a really splendid intellect like that possessed by our great statesmen?"

A pleasant shout of gay laughter met his interrogation. "Why Perry," said Emile, "we thought you'd ask something really difficult."

"It depends," replied Delnot seriously, "upon the

position from which you view it."

"I leave it to Harold. Your question is not a question. There is but one point of view for the members of this Subrosial to take of it. Pleasure is the motto of our life, not usefulness. To be useful is to be coarse, vulgar, and a slave to the world that uses and forgets, that becomes familiar with the greatness it subsequently scorns. But the gift of pleasing the lovers of pleasure is to become a part of the system of pleasure itself, and to have the devotion of those whose homage and affection ends only with death. Apropos, Pauline, sing your song of the 'Bird and the Statesman.'"

With a voice of compass, sweetness and culture that might well have won fame and fortune in grand opera,

Pauline sang as follows:

A bird sat on a tree one day, singing, singing,
The summer's sun shone bright and gay, singing, singing,
And all the world heard sweet the lay, singing, singing,
And laughed and smiled and blessed the day, singing, singing.

And winter came, the night wind sigh'd, singing, singing, In tones of sorrow woe betide, singing, singing, His grave was made, the bird had died singing, singing, In sorrow all the world replied, singing, singing.

A statesman stood beneath the tree, thinking, thinking, Of war and rout o'er land and sea, thinking, thinking, How great was his prosperity, thinking, thinking, And all the world said it is He-thinking, thinking.

And winter came, the storm wind sigh'd, thinking, thinking, In tones of anger woe betide, thinking, thinking, His grave was made, the statesman died thinking, thinking, Forgotten, by the world belied, thinking, thinking.

As the last of the sad tones died away, the company

remained silent, dreaming, perhaps thinking.
"Come, Delnot," said Warren, "that fate shall not apply to you, and let us dissipate the spell of the en-chantress with the spell of the enchanter," and the cups were quickly filled to overflowing and soon as gaily

quaffed.

It was at this juncture that Harold arose to a standing position. The sweet smile that characterized his expression was present, as ever, though his complexion appeared a trifle paler than usual. Gazing kindly on each and every one of his guests, he said, with great gentleness of tone and gesture: "My friends, you do not know, perhaps, how could you imagine such a strange thing, but this is my last happy meeting with you. This is my last supper with you. And in suitable recollection of the cherished event, I wish you to kindly accept as a slight souvenir of many happy occasions passed together, the little mementoes I would now hand you." Suiting the action to the word, he removed by the handful from a jewelled box in his possession, many gems of rare and extraordinary beauty, solitary and connected, and placed them in a prepared receptacle of sandalwood at each one's place.

The gay effusion of the spirits of wine which had begun to possess the company was momentarily checked by the strange words and conduct of the speaker, as the

attention of all was arrested.

Harold continued, "Have no fears of the justice of

my choice in this matter, nor connect with it any painful suggestions of misfortune. On the contrary, my retirement is due to a fancied desire to pursue certain studies, a due attention to which forbids the charming

pursuit of present pleasures."

Delnot, who had long been astonished at the headlong precipitancy of magnificent extravagance that marked the career and every action of Harold Godwin, had soundly conjectured the true cause which the sentimental nature of his friend concealed beneath the

garb of science.

"But hold, my friend," said Delnot, "this must not be. These trinkets with which you deluge us are worth more than a Prince's ransom—more than the redemption of many mortgages. I am a sort of connoisseur of jewels. The necklace you are now so gaily fastening upon the neck of Aphrodite is antique and of Viennese origin and is of almost incalculable value."

"Stay, Harold," said Aphrodite, "your fancies are my law, but I cannot consent to this," gently disengag-

ing herself.

"We cannot, it is impossible," came from others.

"Will you not, my friends? Then they shall be cast into the flame, the ocean, or some devouring abyss whence they can never return. If my friends cannot accept them, they shall perish forever from the face of the earth. They are my heirlooms, associated in the past with some wealth, splendor and distinction. Now that I shall bid farewell to the latter, the former must go with them. They cannot go better than to my friends as slight mementoes. They certainly cannot and shall not go the way of commerce. You would not have me put them up at auction, would you? The ghosts of my ancestors would haunt the purchasers," he said with a smile. "No," he continued, "this is the proper and only thing to do with them. Come, Aphrodite, let me replace this necklace."

There was no alternative but obedience. The gentle

insistence of his manner was too sincere for doubt or negation. Observing the momentary seriousness of his company, he raised to his lips a glowing, sparkling goblet. "Come, ladies and gentlemen," he said, with a graceful gesture, "drink with me." He drank a trifle deeper. The eyes of all sparkled under the strange added excitement and each imbibed a little deeper. Each in turn began to feel an infection and the bowl flowed freely and faster but none were so gay as the young and handsome master of the tottering palace.

And then Pauline's sweet voice arose, singing:

Farewell no more, 'twill not be said For who can part the soul's belief That conquers death, survives the dead, And brings the breaking heart relief.

"Give back my child," the mother weeps
In plaintive accents loud and wild.

"He is not dead, he only sleeps,"
An angel whispers, "here's your child."

"Give back my spouse," the mourner cried,
"Oh, who shall wrest my all from me."
"No one but God," the soul replied,
"And he'll return your love to thee."

Then dry your tears, 'tis not farewell, Around you breathes the incense sweet, Of happy thoughts, that feel the spell Of love's sweet soul, again to meet.

By this time the glasses flowed freely and frequently. The table had been cleared except of the wines and flowers. The servants had withdrawn, and except the blind musicians, who occupied a portion of the conservatory that entered upon the great dining hall, no one remained to disturb the entire privacy of the company.

"I feel like doing something awful to-night," said

Aphrodite.

"You cannot do anything awful," said Delnot, gracefully. "Jove was awful but Venus was beautiful. You might do something beautiful."

"Pauline, are you not jealous at his compliments to

me," said Aphrodite to Pauline.

"No, I think not, Aphrodite, so long as Harold is near us. The heart is a magnetic affair, quite affected by attractions from opposite directions. My Perry is safe while your Harold is near." And the beautiful songstress imprisoned the statesman in her arms.

The example set by Pauline and Perry became contagious and was gleefully followed by the others. The lights were slowly and imperceptibly dimmed and a warm and glowing twilight settled upon the scene, to

the soft throbbings of the music.

Then in the mellow light arose softly from all, as in a dream, the deep-sounding chorus:

Sleep, sleep, fold your arms around me. Rest, rest, for your heart hath found me. Dream, ah, dream forever more, Leave, ah, leave me nevermore, Leave, ah, leave me nevermore,

Traveler rest, all else forget, Pillow here the weary head. Forget the past and all your woes, On this bosom find repose.

Chorus: Sleep, sleep, etc.

Traveler, rest, thy journey's done. Rest thee well, the morrow's sun Shall not disturb thy blissful rest, Pillowed here, upon my breast.

Chorus: Sleep, sleep, etc.

As this song died away, the lights were still lowered. There appeared about the center of the table a weird figure, shrouded and motionless. In time a slight motion was slowly apparent which gradually became more

pronounced, and by further degrees fantastic waves of form and color came to be suspended in the strange and mystic light. It was a combination of the real and unreal, in successive manifestations, a living, trembling picture, a moving statue, marble breathed into life, colors of the artist changing, rippling on the mellow background. The low music reverberated more slowly or faster in response apparently to the vivacity of the scene or the languor of the graceful motions. At one moment was visible a living Proserpine escaping with fleet-footed haste from the dark regions of her angry lord, now looking back with terror on the dismal abodes of the condemned, now looking forward to the celestial heights of hope and life.

In the next moment there flashed upon a rippling surface in the actual perfection of nature, the varying tints and agitated waters of the Laco di Como. The breath of the spectators came and went with gratified expectancy at every wonderful transmutation. At last the music became slower, the gloom grew deeper, the shrouded specter was once more silent and weird and seemed to return to the unknown shore from which it had so strangely emanated. "It was Emile," whispered

Pauline to Delnot.

Again in the mellow light passed and repassed the sparkling wine to lips that were moist and warm, to lips that mingled wine and lips. Again gayer and louder grew the music, again on flashed the lights with the radiance of most resplendent day. And then both lights and music slowly faded away to an almost imperceptible and delicious gloom.

In the dreamy quietude of this moment, the ladies

silently and surreptitiously withdrew.

"Some new surprise," thought the gentlemen as the

ladies' presence was missed.

Soon a weird and shadowy light—a seeming ignis fatuus, was seen slowly hovering about the hall, tending to lead in the direction of the shadowy arches of the

sumptuous drawing rooms beyond. At this time arose a clear sweet voice singing these words:

The Will o' the Wisp in woods so drear
The traveler dreads to follow,
It leads to nooks and crooks of fear
On mountain or in hollow;
The huntsman trembles at the sight,
The hermit fears the evil light,
The peasant chatters with affright
And all abhor the horrid sight.

The Will o' the Wisp, the Will o' the Wisp, O!

This Will o' the Wisp kind friends fear not
It comes from beauty's bower
Its light is hallowed with the thought
Of every joyous hour;
So follow now with fearless eyes
This vision of the midnight skies,
Which leads you to a sweet surprise
Nay, leads you to a grand surprise.

The Will o' the Wisp, the Will o' the Wisp, O!

The gentlemen thus elegantly admonished, slowly arose and followed the ignis fatuus to the grand arches of the drawing room. As they entered an astonish-

ing surprise entranced their senses.

With a crash of transcendent music and a startling blaze of light, there appeared amid fantastic decorations as upon a waving sea of flowers, the graceful forms of the ladies draped in the transparent gauzes of Goddesses of the Sea, and grouped as Nereids gleefully rejoicing to behold the birth of Aphrodite as she languidly opened her beautiful eyes and supinely sprung from the white foam of the sea.

The spectators stood enthralled by the ineffable beauty of the living spectacle. Then indeed was felt the superiority of Nature even to the chefs d'œuvres of art. The most excellent forms and colors of marble and canvas are but cold imitations of the suffused

blood, the warm breath, the heaving bosom, the sparkling eyes and supple gestures of Nature's life. The true artist fervently accepts and worships the true Prototype of Art. And thus the spectators were spellbound and transported by the extraordinary presentation.

In time however, the smiles and eyes of the Nereids began to wander from the sea and their goddess to their adorers and worshipers of perfect art; and the living pictures unlike the chiseled Galatea, responded in the vital music of the human voice to the thoughts and sentiments of the human soul.

"Bravo," cried the spectators; "Bravo Aphrodite.

Bravo the Nereids."

It was then that Aphrodite arose from her recumbent position and sprang forward among her gay companions. "Come," she said, "the dance—the dance."

With the vigor and grace of a new born goddess she took her place by the side of Harold. Amid a gay storm of congratulations, each Nereid was received by

her mortal lord. And then began the dance.

The music laughed loud and gay to the most suggestive measures. With bewitching smiles of coquetry the Nereids performed famous genuflexions and ravishing postures. "Bravo Aphrodite;" "Bravo Pauline;" "Bravo Emile," "Bravo all," came from the dancers.

The arms and shoulders of the dancers—the forms visible through vistas of gauze, appeared now encompassed with a delightful and voluptuous glow.

"Bravo," cried Delnot. "Bravo, bravo," came from

the others.

Louder and gayer grew the music and the measure. Louder and gayer grew the lively acclamations of the dancers. Both sexes were enraptured with the warmth and gaiety of the environments. Without pausing the overflowing cup was passed and repassed, and the acme of terpsichorean pleasure hovered just at the lips of the voluptuary. The eye was tantalized, the passions asked for more.

By this time the participants were in a perfect frenzy of delightful motion—in an ecstatic commixture of masculine strength and feminine voluptuousness. The senses were deliciously overwhelmed in the madness of the moment, the wine, the warm desires. The acme was reached. The music ended with a great crash. The lights fell into eclipse, and each transcendent quick-breathing beauty sunk voluptuously into the arms of her impassioned lover.

CHAPTER V

WILLY

"I AM not happy and never shall be. I know I shall

not."

"I don't know why Mademoiselle is not happy. She has everything in the world she could wish for. A palace to live in, a boudoir like this—a dream, carriages, horses, servants, a magnificent income—and all her own, without gift from anyone or obligation to anyone."

"Yes, Aimee, but there is a craving here for something. In vain I try to find a substitute for my cravings and plunge into excesses in the hope of forgetting my longings, only to find on the return of my judgment that my desire is further removed from realization."

"I know, Mademoiselle. You love Mr. Harold with

all your great heart."

"Everybody knows it," cried Aphrodite, and placing her head on the shoulder of her maid, she burst into tears.

Aimee comfortingly soothed the forehead of the sobbing sufferer, and with kind words and gentle caresses sought to alleviate the evident anguish of her mistress.

"Oh, Aimee, I am bad, very bad. I am positively ashamed of myself." And she hid her face still deeper. "I do such shocking things. All to please him, and yet not exactly that. He is not bad, vicious, no. I just get started upon some mad prank and I go too far. He never finds fault, but I probably shock him." Then suddenly changing and lifting herself erect, the tears dashed away, and a firm expression upon her face, she

said, "and what if I do extraordinary things? Whose concern is it but my own? Harold would not marry me if I were weighed out in diamonds, and more beautiful than Lady Hamilton. Lady Hamilton herself could not subdue his heart to true affection. The woman that he loves must be pure as the driven snow in thought and action."

"I don't know Lady Hamilton," said Aimee, "but I am sure she cannot be more beautiful than my mis-

tress.'

"Lady Hamilton was a distinguished beauty of the past," replied Aphrodite. "Her beauty and intellect enslaved to her will some of the most remarkable men of her time, and thereby she became a potent factor even in the destiny of great nations. But her name, though brilliant, is tarnished"—

"Even as the sun has spots upon its beautiful sur-

face," suggested Aimee.

"Like her," said Aphrodite abstractedly, "I have sat for Psyche and Innocence, but, unlike her, I have not yet brought unhappiness, disgrace or death upon

any but my own heart."

At that moment was brought to Aimee, who handed it to her mistress, a carte de visite. Aphrodite glanced at it and quickly said, "Aimee, I must be excused. Say that I am indisposed but will be pleased if he will call to-morrow or next day."

Upon Aimee's return the maid said, "Ah, Mademoiselle, he was so polite and so sad; he asked plaintively after your health and said he would be sure to call to-

morrow."

"Yes," replied Aphrodite, "he will surely call. I wish I possessed a better return for his unquestioning love and devotion than this preoccupied heart."

" He is not graceful, like Mr. Harold, nor has his

smile, nor so polished."

"Of course not, but what matters, he brings to me his heart, full of pure young affection and offers that,

the noblest offering in man's power. Why does fate annoy human experience by constantly offering the unwanted and refusing the wanted? Give me a little Chartreuse, Aimee. I have a notion to accept Mr. Vanderwenter and make an end of this folly;" and then, with a pause, "I have a notion not to. Hurry, Aimee, my Chartreuse."

The soft rustling of silk announced the approach of an angel and presently Pauline appeared, radiant and charming. "Ah, your lips are sweet without Chartreuse," said Pauline, "and what flowers! they are simply magnificent," referring to a basket on the center

table.

"Yes, they are as handsome as any I ever saw," replied Aphrodite.

"May I ask who is the donor? Though I can easily

guess."

"Who?" smilingly queried Aphrodite.

"Mr. Vanderwenter."

"Why, how did you know?"

"All the world knows. Can any man in New York love the Aphrodite in dead earnest and not become a

cynosure?"

"Now, isn't that annoying. Can't I have the sanctity and secrecy of a little love? Is it true then, that the quiet and serene love granted the lowly flower, is forbidden to the great oak whose protecting branches are exposed to every mighty storm?" This last was said in a serio-comic manner.

"Yes, you remember what Goldsmith says about

love—

"'On earth unseen, and only found to warm the turtle's nest."

"But to return, Pauline," said Aphrodite, "has the

world divined my true love affair?"

"Divined? Why, he follows your footsteps like a faithful dog; waits on you at the opera, sends flowers from his mamma's famous conservatory, names dogs

and horses without number, 'Aphrodite,' has a yacht in construction of the same announced name, and, some say, stands at the corner of your avenue till every light in your house is darkened, and would write sonnets and sing them if he could. This is what the world says."

"Truly his love is great. But he is simple to let the

world know his business."

"But, Aphrodite," answered Pauline, "he may be a very wise man according to Dryden:

"'Love never fails to master what she finds. Works different ways on different minds, The fool enlightens, and the wise she blinds."

"I fear he is not a very wise man to be so trans-

parent."

"Nay, Aphrodite, it is your luminosity, not his transparency, that offends. The moth that flies within your radiance becomes notable, and his every action marked, under your reflected light. And now, what has become of Harold?"

"I have neither seen nor heard of him since the night of the banquet at Hillstone," replied Aphrodite. "And though I have written notes and sent messages of inquiry, I am unable to hear from him. Some fanciful notion of his to be temporarily absent somewhere."

"I think Harold really meant what he said that

night," remarked Pauline.

"Surely not," said Aphrodite, now quite concerned. "Harold will not leave us. The conqueror will not abandon his conquest. His life has been a poem of pleasure."

"Delnot hinted to me that Harold's long-continued extravagance had at last reached the principal of his

estate."

"That circumstance," said Aphrodite, "should in no wise alter his life or send him into banishment. Before I would permit a consideration of that kind to affect Harold's welfare and happiness, he should have half

my fortune, yes, all of it. I have been so thoughtless,

so blind. I shall investigate this matter."

"Now, be careful, my friend," said Pauline, "or you will do still greater harm. Perry feels as you do about it, but says it will be impossible to approach Harold on the subject. Perry says that a man knowingly on the brink of ruin, who can give away a colossal fortune as Harold did the other night in obedience to a controlling sentiment, will be hard to approach, in fact will be im-

possible to approach in the way of assistance."

Tears were now in the impulsive Aphrodite's eyes. "Oh, Pauline, what shall we do to save him? I know you love Harold—we all do. And he loved you, too; yes he did." And now she was sobbing and crying as she continued, "often he spoke to me in praise of you in every way, and I was jealous. Forgive me Pauline, I was jealous of everyone that came near him or that basked in the light of his smile. Yes, Pauline, what shall we do to save him? Think of him in reduced circumstances, unable to dispense his magnificent hospitality, unable to indulge his royal generosity that deluged his friends with affluent proofs of his regard. Oh, the thought distresses me, the thought drives me mad; I cannot stand it. Aimee, Aimee, a little Chartreuse. No, I shall not endure it. Half of my fortune is his, nay, all of it, as freely as the gifts he showered upon us."

"Noble girl," cried Pauline, now affected to tears also, by the generous devotion of her friend. "Noble Aphrodite! Indeed, the world cannot say he squandered his fortune among those who neither loved nor remembered him. My estates go with yours also, Aphrodite. But alas! we are deceiving ourselves. Perry is right, the magnificent sentimentalist will, as Perry says, be magnificent in his adversity and disdain

our offers."

"He is an idiot," said Aphrodite, now firm again, common sense is common sense."

CHAPTER VI

AT THE OPERA

APHRODITE'S box at the opera was just opposite the family box of the Vanderwenters. The relation of the boxes might have had something to do with the relations of the occupants. Perhaps the first of Cupid's darts that fired the heart of poor Willy was received from the direction of Aphrodite's opera box, though when, if at all, she had never considered. Aphrodite was as regular an attendant at grand opera as a worshipping muse could be. Her beautiful face and splendid figure had become a feature of expectation and comment as well with the audience and press as with the artists themselves; and many of the latter had enjoyed the personal gratification of her elegant hospitality and charming camaraderie.

On this night she entered shortly before the rising of the curtain. Immediately upon her appearance in the front of her box, intently looking upon the concave aggregation of wealth and beauty, fashion and folly, there was a perceptible stir, a rustling murmur of soft sounds. Her perfect health, strength and beauty unconsciously attracted every eye within the influence of her presence. As she gazed upon the audience with an irrepressible smile of good humor, every man within its influence construed it specially for himself and even the women could not be insensible to the impression of large-hearted kindness of disposition. As she smiled, the audience looked up and became fascinated. soft flutter arose to a murmur and then broke into a storm of applause. Aphrodite smilingly withdrew from the front of the box. A thousand whispers uttered, "It is the Aphrodite," for so she had come to be known.

The occupants of the box opposite to Aphrodite's had not failed to observe the ovation though they had not participated in it. They, too, knew by sight the beautiful Aphrodite. The aristocratic looking elderly lady, who plainly presided as the mother and ruler of the two interesting young creatures with her, endeavored to distract the attention of her children from the strange outburst which she inwardly deprecated as unseemly and outrageous.

"Marie Leona," she said to a young girl possessed of more diamonds than beauty, "is that not the Duke

of Primrose in the box there in the center?"

"I am not sure, mamma," replied the girl.

"Well, ask your sister, Violanita."

Violanita, with still more diamonds and still less beauty than her younger sister, languidly replied, "Yes, mamma, that's the duke, isn't he charming?"

"Isn't that the Mutro-Ragley's box?" asked Marie

Leona.

"Why, Marie Leona, don't point. There's Mr. Ward McIlroy. Your conduct is awful for a graduate of Mrs. Duane's fashionable school for young ladies."

"I'm not pointing, only my fan fell over that way, in that direction. But, is not that Mrs. Mutro-Ragley's

box?" persisted Marie Leona.

"No, I don't know whose box it is," answered Mrs. Vanderwenter, still looking at Aphrodite's box, from which her attention had but briefly been diverted by the frowning appearance of Mr. Ward McIlroy, who was the chief guardian of the manners and style, etiquette and social statistics of New York.

"Oh, I don't mean the beautiful Aphrodite's box, everybody knows that. I mean the one where the Duke

of Primrose is," said Marie Leona.

"Marie Leona," austerely chided the elderly matron,

"I trust you will not know so much. The box you

refer to is Mr. Mutro-Ragley's."

Delnot and Warren were seated obliquely across from the Vanderwenters. At the very commencement of the applause, Delnot remarked, "the Aphrodite has arrived."

"How do you know?" queried Warren. The applause had now assumed the proportions of an ovation.

"I know it in three ways. This applause is the incense irresistibly offered by all men to a beautiful woman, and the only woman becoming dominant as such at this time in this city is the beautiful Aphrodite."

"Well, your second reason," suggested Warren.

"The second is the natural complement of the first. See the expression of distrust that flashes from the averted eye-brows of the elderly lady in the opposite box, which is to some extent shared by nearly every other woman who does not possess the gift of beauty."

"Perhaps the elderly lady has some grounds for distrust," said Warren. "And now for your third

reason."

"Behold the frown on the lowering brows of our

friend, Ward McIlroy."

"Your analysis of the transaction is complete," replied Warren, laughing. "Yes, Ward discerns an

enemy to the good order of society."

At the same moment, in the parquet Ward McIlroy was whispering to an elderly and highly respectable personage by his side. "This is horrible, horrible in the extreme. An ovation, just think of it! To an outsider, an unknown, at least not one of the 600. I have had misgivings for some time past from that young lady. I have felt intuitively that she was a storm cloud full of lightning and would strike some day. And now I feel it coming, here in the chosen temple of fashion, among the chosen, the salt of this continent. Heaven help me, but I must avert the danger."

The respectable personage at his side answered not at first. He, too, was under the influence and had felt the caloric of that beaming smile. Besides, he was not the chosen leader and guardian of the salt. The old gentleman replied, in a cracked voice, "such a lovely girl."

"Bosh!" replied Ward, almost fiercely. "Are the lofty gates of society to be laid low at the simple behest of physical beauty? These gates which are the product of generations of wealth, culture and refinement?"

"That is, supposed to be," broke in the old gentle-

man.

"Actually are, upon the hypothesis of decent society," said Ward McIlroy.

"Very well," replied the old gentleman, "I see,-a

kind of legal fiction."

With a great clash of music the opera opened and this conversation ceased, but not the forebodings and anxiety of Ward McIlroy.

The curtain had scarcely descended upon the first act when admirers began to troop into Aphrodite's

box.

"There they go," said Delnot to his friend, "the men can no more withstand her influence than steel the magnet."

"Or than vegetation can refuse to bask in the sun-

light."

From their present situation, the two gentleman en-

joyed a full view of Aphrodite's box.

"Look at that smile now and interpret it if you can," continued Delnot. "It is as universal as the glorious sun itself, as you suggested just now, gilds and warms every heart and face under its beams. Men adore the warm and beautiful in woman and readily surrender to these attractions. There goes the old commodore."

Just then, a large elderly man, with snow white hair and a rugged, weather-beaten, rather red face, appeared

in the box.

Aphrodite graciously welcomed him. "Our last meeting was at Madrid," said the commodore, with a friendly smile, "and I followed your yacht afterwards from Venice, but your craft was too swift for my old

flagship."

"For a good reason, Commodore. Your flagship, they say, is, as it should be, the center of the good cheer and hospitality of the Club, and the grey-hound quality of speed may properly be relegated to the less important and less distinguished members." Then turning to her company, she continued, "Gentlemen, you all know the commodore?" "I should say so," interposed the commodore, looking around and shaking hands with all and "Well, my friends, you are all here, the chiefs of my captains. I believe we sailors all have tastes alike. I come in from a long voyage and find you all properly worshipping at the shrine of Aphrodite, the queen of the sea. And here's my young friend. How do you do, sir? Young man, beware!" This was addressed to Willy Vanderwenter who had just then joined the group.

To him, Aphrodite was particularly charming; and

for him space was made near by herself.

The youth, for he was still quite young, bowed politely to his acquaintances; but his eyes, which were of a mild blue color, seldom were averted from the direction of Aphrodite. Her power over this youth was so manifest, even to herself, that she made a generous attempt to conceal his submission from others by extending him on her part special consideration and actual deference.

Willy's figure was small, not very straight, but neat, and his manners fair but entirely without distinction. His chin was weak and his forehead high and narrow. In response to the commodore's hearty salutation, he said, very pleasantly,

"I am glad to see you, Commodore. We heard you

were still at sea."

"So I was, sir, so I was. But I hope, you perceive, I'm not always at sea."

Another crash of music drowned the voices of all, and

another scene appeared upon the stage.

When Willy appeared in Aphrodite's box, the elderly lady in the box opposite could scarcely conceal her nervous annoyance. Fortunately, in a moment after, Mr. Ward McIlroy arrived at Mrs. Vanderwenter's box. His visit was, she felt, quite providential. To him alone could she confide her feelings of chagrin. In the course of this conversation she said, "No, Mr. Mc-Ilroy, beauty alone, as you say, is not a sufficient credential. You do not think my son Willy is really infatuated, do you?"

"No, I apprehend not. Undoubtedly he is just

amusing himself."

"I hope so, but it's such bad taste for those gentlemen,—among them, many of the most excellent of our set, to devote themselves so publicly to a person who has not been duly admitted, as it were."

"Your admirable taste resents this attack, and I think many of the ladies will resent it also," said Ward

McIlroy.

"We must see that this threatening person shall not enter further upon the sacred circle of society," said Mrs. Vanderventer.

"We must see to it," answered Mr. Ward McIlroy.

Many carriages bore homeward that night after the

opera many persons of many minds.

Willy's mind was complacent and calm. His mother's mind was much the reverse but she had no opportunity yet to express her views or to put him on his guard. The minds of the men that had approached Aphrodite were serenely flattered, and content within themselves. And the minds of the women who had tried not to see her were perturbed and hoped for vengeance.

The mind of the intellectual Delnot, who had observed everything, was keenly delighted with the interesting play of human nature that transpired before the scenes, more than with even the brilliancy of grand opera, which for the first time had ceased to engross his faculties and attention.

Upon her arrival at home, as she was about to pass from the carriage to the steps, Aphrodite was accosted by a beggar: "Help me, madame, for my wife and children." She glanced at the man from head to foot and gently pausing, she called to her maid, "Aimee, give me my portemonnaie." The girl obeyed. Taking it into her possession, without opening it, or even looking at it, Aphrodite handed the plethoric pocket book, full of thick bills and yellow gold, to the astonished mendicant, and gently bowing, said kindly, "it may bring relief to those you love," and she passed on.

It did bring relief. The progress of death was stayed in an unfortunate but worthy family. The man was amply able to remove to a less crowded field of industry and to commence a new life in prosperity and happiness, and this simple act of charity, forgotten by Aphrodite as soon as performed, was forever thereafter commemorated in the hearts of a thankful and God-fearing family, from whose infants' lips arose, in the morning and at even time, the incense of prayers, among which were mingled and sanctified the name of "The

Beautiful Aphrodite."

CHAPTER VII

THE ENGAGEMENT

It was the next day after the events recounted in the last chapter that Willy Vanderwenter called upon Aphrodite. She received him with kind familiarity, for he had been a constant visitor, in her sumptuous parlors. The natural grace and charm of her manner cast a halo of sunshine around her presence. Willy was pleased, and inhaled the aroma of her beauty. This he might naturally have done, if not in love, but, being in love, the effect was not short of delirious intoxication.

In the conversation that followed, they had entertainingly discussed the leading features of the last evening's occurrences; the excellence of the opera, the return of the commodore, the number of old yachting acquaintances she had met,—when Willy, who could no longer restrain the controlling passion of his being, ap-

proached the great subject of his then mission:

"Now, Aphrodite, for so you have commanded me to address you, let me come to the subject of our own affairs. You know that several times you have declined to favorably consider my proposal of marriage. You know that, notwithstanding all this, I have steadfastly, and I hope unobtrusively, remained faithful to my love for you. For this, however, I claim no credit, it has become a part of my nature to love, nay, to worship, you."

"Candidly, Willy," replied Aphrodite, "I don't know what I should do in this exigency. Some days I think I should accept your offer, other days I am disposed to

decline it."

"Then let this be one of the days when you are inclined to accept," said Willy, with a hopeful smile.

"That would scarcely be fair to you in the event that to-morrow I should be differently inclined."

"I will at least have had one day's complete happiness," rejoined Willy, "if I should have to die tomorrow."

"Indeed your love is very beautiful. One who loves thus must during the times at least of his trust and repose, enjoy a high serenity of emotional satisfaction. You almost captivate me with your steadfastness," and a corresponding glance of sympathy swept over the young man.

This glance was to him a warm beam of encouragement beyond any he had heretofore received, and he

continued:

"As I said before, Aphrodite, I can claim no credit. My devotion to you is nature now to me."

"But suppose I should feel obliged to reject you

finally?"

"It will be my death," quietly responded the young man.

Aphrodite was touched by this reply. "But, my dear friend, it should not be thus, matters of love should not, must not, be so serious."

"They are with me," rejoined the youth.
"Your mother will probably not sanction our marriage," said Aphrodite.

"It matters not," replied Willy. "You alone are

the arbiter of my fate, not my mother."

"But she may not sanction it." "That makes no difference."

"But it does."

"How so?"

"I cannot honorably, from my standpoint, agree to marry you without your mother's consent. I could not endure to be charged with interloping into any one's family: my self-respect would not permit it."

"And I must have my mother's consent?" asked Willy.

"Yes."

"I shall get it, I think."

"I don't think you can. There is another obstacle also—serious and insuperable it seems to me. I am not a good woman." She hesitated, and said slowly,

" I love—"

"Hold, Aphrodite—no more I beseech you, on that line," he said, with a calm smile. "I know not and care not what you have been. I take you as you are," continuing to smile kindly. "I love you, Aphrodite, as you are. You, as you are, have become my necessity. Neither am I concerned about the future. My life, my mind, demands the present—not the past or the future." The last was seriously said.

She remained silent and overcome. He continued,

with a smile, "I wish you as you are."

"But I have serious faults that you should know, and knowing them would probably satisfy you that your mother's objection will be right. A man should know everything about the woman he proposes to make his wife."

"Other men might wish to, but I am not concerned about anything but yourself as you are." Then smiling again, he continued, "therefore pardon me, but please never, at any time, say anything about what might possibly be disagreeable—but only let me love you."

"But suppose I love another?"

"I don't want to know it."

"Suppose I should hereafter love another?"

"I don't know—I cannot look into the future, no one can with any certainty. I ask for the present.

That is boon enough for me."

Aphrodite was much overcome with this man's simple, unquestioning devotion. She extended her hand, saying, "obtain your mother's consent."

"And after that?" he queried.

"You may hope."

Bowing deferentially, he withdrew.

Aphrodite paced at first slowly and then more rapidly up and down the apartment, her hands firmly clasped together and her head bowed in thought. At last she said,

"Surely his mother will not consent—I hope not.

But his love is beautiful."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOCIAL GUARDIAN

WARD McIlroy awoke the same morning with the intention of disrobing the wolf that threatened the fold.

When he had breakfasted and ordered his carriage, he directed his driver to take him first to the commodore's. There he found that worthy personage in the iolliest and most communicative of humors.

"What occasions the honor of this early visit from the social chief this morning?" asked the commodore,

after passing the usual compliments.

"Well, to tell you the truth," replied Ward, "I am here strictly in a social capacity for social information."

"Oh, I see! About the new yacht that is to defend the cup. Of course. Why, Ward, she is the finest thing that ever flew a jib. Now, it's a secret, the lines on which she is built are of course a secret but there is no harm in telling you in Book Eleven at page 162 of the Manual you will find the original lines on which the old America was built, but those lines have been entirely revolutionized and in book —"

"But hold on, Commodore," said Mr. McIlroy, "that is all very interesting —"

"Yes, of course, very interesting," interjected the commodore, "and these lines, you see—"

"But excuse me, Commodore," said Ward McIlroy,

desiring to bring his matter up.

"Why, of course you want to know how they came to be reset," insisted the commodore pleasantly.

"No," hastily put in Ward. "That is not the point. You see, that is not the matter I was after. I am always interested in yachting matters, which are also sometimes social matters, but just now I want to know," coughing punctiliously, "who the lady is whom I saw you visiting in her box last night at the opera?"

"Oh, that's it, is it. Well, my dear fellow, she's a prince—I mean a queen. She sails her own boat which is elegant and fleet and she herself is the handsomest craft I ever saw, and I've sailed the world over and visited every court in the civilized world and many in

the uncivilized."

At this stage the commodore blew a shrill silver whistle and a person of nondescript color and nation-

ality appeared, dressed in the garb of a sailor.

"Bring the bumpers," said the commodore, and this person disappeared, but almost immediately returned with two huge glasses and two huge bottles or decanters, from which, upon manipulation, issued a pop as of a musket and the fizz of a steam engine, and a tumbler which being filled, Ward McIlroy was almost forced to seize and drink of, under the wild gestures of the commodore, drinking and gesticulating, and uttering amid gurgles: "Drink her down—quick, Ward. Lose flavor—East Indian—drink. New. Brought her back—New. Drink. New York—boys—treat. New York."

Ward was too much of a gentleman to entirely decline the well intentioned hospitality of the mariner, but he was also too well versed in the methods of seafaring men to trust his sobriety to their keeping. So, with face full of fizz and eyes and nose full of pungency, he desisted from an extensive trial of the beverage after a sip or two which he declared afterwards actually went with a dangerous tingle from the top of his scalp even to his pedal extremities.

The commodore was too blinded by the spray to ob-

serve the caution of his guest, as at the close of the cheer he ordered the lackey to remove the glasses.

"What do you think of her," enthusiastically in-

quired the commodore.

"I think she is a wolf," said Ward, whose mind was still ruminating on the object of his mission.

"My God, sir! You can't mean it," said the com-

modore, who was thinking only of his beverage.

"I do, sir," returned Ward.
"Well, by Jove, sir. I shall not stand it. She's cost me ten thousand dollars to import into New York in her present shape—and to meet with this from the Chief Mogul of Society!"

"You have no right to import such things to the demoralization of the youth of the 600 and to the disturbance of respectable families." This was said with

much severity and dignity.

"My --- hear this! What right have you to insult me in my own house? For less than this I had deemed it my duty with any other person to call him out. I ask again, by what right do you thus malign me and thus speak of her whom I so proudly imported?"

"It is my duty, sir," replied Ward, "to tell you the truth. Upon me devolves the sacred cause of good society in this city, and in that behalf I tell you, she is

a wolf, my friend."

"Oh no, you are not my friend, and this is unendurable. I can stand it no longer." The shrill whistle sounded shriller, with a terrible keenness. Then soon the nondescript appeared.

"Bring the benders," said the commodore.

The man instantly returned with two flat-looking boxes.

"You may retire," said the commodore. The non-

descript retired.

The commodore proceeded to unwrap and open the boxes. He had unwrapped one, opened it and placed it upon the table. He, by the same gesture pushed it

toward Mr. Ward McIlroy-it, to that gentleman's un-

speakable horror, contained a huge firearm.

"You may have your choice," dignifiedly said the commodore, "it's loaded, forty-five slugs. I'll take this as you choose," deliberately proceeding to unwrap the other box, which undoubtedly contained another article of the same destructive nature.

Ward McIlroy was horrified. "Heavens," he rapidly reflected, "there can be no honor gained in a contest with this madman." A bright thought struck him

-he would humor him.

"Sir," he said, with a grave bow, "would you mind leaving me alone in this room for a minute till I consider this little matter?"

"Certainly," replied the commodore, also with fatal dignity, and a low bow: "I will retire for two minutes

by the watch," and thereupon withdrew.

"I will also retire for more than two minutes," enunciated Ward. "The man is a madman—made mad, no doubt, by this terrible creature. Horrible! Horrible!" he said, as he hastily retreated from the premises, and gaining the curb of the street directed his driver: "To Mrs. Vanderwenter's and rapidly; remain not here a moment, it is not safe here."

The bewildered coachman swiftly drove to Mrs. Van-

derwenter's.

When the commodore returned to his parlor only to find that his opponent had disappeared, his disappointment assumed a strange and terrible shape. The shrill whistle resounded at short intervals and the servants were dispatched in every direction to discover, if possible, the vanished enemy. But to no purpose; the enemy had successfully eluded pursuit. The nondescript then fell specially under the wrath of the commodore. "You at least are still within reach." he cried, "and I'll practice a little on you. Take that card there, sir, the ace I mean, and hold it up."

"No save," cried the nondescript.
"No save! I'll save you, sir. Here!" and showing him the card and standing him up with the hand and card just before a section of a convenient palm tree that decorated a corner of the room, the commodore retired about ten paces, and seizing one of the pistols, deliberately fired.

At the explosion the nondescript ducked from one

side of the room to the other.

"No me killee," he cried supplicatingly.

"No," said the commodore, "no danger to you, but look at the card," and pointing to it in the terrified grasp of the nondescript, he showed that the center spot had been replaced by a bullet hole.

The grasp of the nondescript relaxed at the magic sight, a broad grin covered his black features and displayed his white teeth, as he said, prostrating himself

before his master:

"Commodore, heap chief. Me do whatever Commodore me tell."

At this moment a servant handed the commodore a card at which he glanced, and said, "Just the man we want, Li Hung, chief functionary of the Chinese delegation. Show him in. Now, Zenghabenji, take position." This time without fear and without a grin, the nondescript assumed the same position, with another ace, and as Li Hung entered, a second shot exploded and a second center was replaced with a hole.

"Ah, me practicee," said Li Hung, "good shotee."
"Yes," replied the commodore, "just keeping my hand in, thought I'd have a chance this morning, but the scoundrel has run away. Do you ever shoot, 'Li?"

"Yes, see," said Li, not in a very firm voice.

"Well, we'll see," said the commodore. "Zenghabenji, get in position there." But as a second thought occurred to him, he said, "wait a minute. Here's a man knows what it is. Zenghabenji, bring the bumpers."

The nondescript returned almost instantly, as before, with the bumpers.

Immediately exclamations of delight in various sylla-

bles emanated from the diplomat.

Equally delighted was the commodore to observe his

appreciation.

"There's nothing like travel to educate a man," said the commodore. "Some of these New Yorkers think they know everything, and the chief of them this morning didn't know as much as this heathen Chinee" (sotto voce).

"Ah! Here we go," said the commodore.

"Ah zee, jo ee, cum ee, zelicious ee, Hur ee," said the Chinaman.

Scarcely had they dried their faces of the abundant spray or taken their breaths, when the commodore waved the nondescript again, solemnly,

"Bring the bumpers."

Again the bumpers came, again the Chinaman exclaimed and now danced with delight and incipient intoxication, "Zee, Hur ee zee, zelicious, zee, grand, premier, zee, Washington, velly, gnadee zee!" were among the incomprehensible utterances that escaped between the gaseous expansions of the steam engine decoction.

In the excitement of the congratulations between the Chinese functionary and the commodore over this newly discovered beverage, the nondescript disappeared for a moment, and when he came in again, his eyes had the same twinkle and his black face the same sleek, newly washed appearance as the two gentlemen's and it thereby appeared that he had taken their word for it and imbibed some of this wonderful liquor himself.

"Well," said the commodore, "now you shall have

your shot at the card."

"Zenghabenji! Position!"

The nondescript got the card and assumed the old position.

Li Hung, in whose hand the commodore had placed

a pistol, hesitated and his hand trembled.

"Come, now," said the commodore, showing the position. "Stand about here and fire away. Bore the center."

Li Hung assumed the position indicated, raised his weapon, pointed it, shut his eyes and pulled the trigger

-but it did not go off.

"What's the matter?" said the commodore. "Never knew that to happen before. These guns are cock sure. Oh, I see!" (examining the weapon) "didn't have it cocked. Well, now we've got her," cocking the pistol and handing it to the now palsied

hand of the functionary.

The functionary raised the weapon preparatory to exploding it, but he never had time to complete the action. The nondescript's eyes had been wide open during this second attempt upon his life. He marked the vacillating nerve, the unsteady hand, and last of all the closing of the eyes of the Chinaman, and with an instinct of self-preservation based on these timely observations, he this time bounded with the rapidity of lightning upon his designless enemy and closed with him just as he was perfunctorily pulling the trigger. The bullet went up in the air and the marksman went down on the ground. The shrill whistle sounded a general alarm, and the servants attired as sailors rushed in to part the apparent combatants. When separated, the nondescript submissively crawled to the side of the commodore.

"What do you mean, you scoundrel, by such con-

duct?" said the commodore, addressing him.

The nondescript mutely but penitently begged forgiveness, and with tears in his eyes muttered, "Me beggee Chinee pardon."

"Hear that, Li? Is that all right? He begs pardon,

makes the amende honorable."

To this the functionary answered in the affirmative.

In fact and in truth, he did not understand what had occurred at all and attributed his fall to some strange action of the commodore's pistol, and to no other cause.

"Well, I'm glad everything is so speedily and honorably adjusted," said the commodore. "Bring the bumpers." The Chinaman smiled, the nondescript instantly disappeared and the commodore said, sotto voce, "I have discovered it—how to conquer the world. Hur, that's it. Take an Anglo-Saxon head to stand it. These ducks, these orientals are drunk already—my mind's as clear as a dew bell. If the Turks had had a cargo of this, the Greeks could have taken Constantinople without a blow."

The nondescript reappeared, the musket popped, the steam engine fizzed, and amid gurgles the Chinaman exclaimed, the commodore puffed, and the nondescript smacked his lips. A little later the Chinaman, overcome by the beverage, was tucked up like a mummy in a large upright chair and left to his meditations.

CHAPTER IX

THE MISSION

WARD McIlroy had not delayed in his exit from the commodore's and rapidly he was driven to Mrs. Vanderwenter's palatial residence. There arrived, he was ushered into the drawing-room and soon Mrs. Vanderwenter appeared.

"Ah, Mrs. Vanderwenter," he cried, "I have solved the problem, caged the bird, trapped the wolf that threatened the happiness and welfare of our social

fold."

"I had every confidence that you alone would be able to avert the danger, which I feel intuitively is overshadowing us, and I am much gratified to learn that my confidence in our great leader is fully justified. But, Mr. McIlroy, you look flushed as if you had passed through some extraordinary scene of excitement."

"It is true, madame, I have," he replied, "but the details of that dread scene," and he visibly shuddered at the recollection, "must remain buried here," touching his heart with two fingers. "The details I must pass

over."

"Were they painful?" interjected Mrs. Vanderwenter.

"Yes, madame, very painful. My life was threatened."

Mrs. Vanderwenter nervously applied her smelling salts.

Ward continued, "but the danger is temporarily averted. The madman was foiled. But the grand results I have achieved in behalf of our world, our people,

our 600, gives me pride and pleasure to recount if they shall enable us to weather the danger of that woman, as I think they will. I have secured evidence from the commodore that is final and overwhelming. The commodore says he imported her to this country from England, I believe. I won't be sure that he said England, as it may have been the Isle of Guernsey, or some other place, I won't be sure about that point. But I am positive he said he imported her into this country and that she cost him about twenty thousand dollars, now I won't be sure that he said twenty thousand, it might have been ten, but I am sure it was a good many thousand dollars, and on this statement I am ready to stand. Pardon me, madame, for the freedom of this communication, but the dangers surrounding us and the pressing necessities of the occasion must plead my excuse," bowing lowly.

"Pardon you, indeed! You shall receive additional proofs of the loyalty which the 600 owe to you who have specially created and are now so chivalrously protecting the propriety of our social institutions even at the risk of your own life," and the last was said with a slight tremor of personal emotion, as if with a little probing the rich old widow would prove not altogether obdurate to the thawing influence of gallantry. But Ward was too wrapped up in the great concerns of Society to observe any symptoms of special consideration for himself. He continued, "With this testimony of the commodore's, and he cannot deny that he said he imported her to this country," with this statement the dangerous ascendancy of this wandering Venus is

dimmed and made harmless."

Just then a little note from her son Willy begged an audience with his mother. Mrs. Vanderwenter continued, "I am so glad he wishes to see me just at this time, when you are here, and may I beg of you to excuse me, and especially to remain here until after my interview with him? For I am sure it is something of

absorbing interest and that I will need your advice in this matter perhaps immediately."

"Of course, madame, I shall remain, ever, I

trust, obedient to my duty and your wishes."

Mrs. Vanderwenter withdrew.

As Mrs. Vanderwenter met her son in another apartment, she was struck by the pallor of his complexion and the seriousness of his demeanor.

"My mother," he cried, "I have come to ask you to grant me the greatest favor possible for me to ask, or

for you to grant."

"How so, my son?"

"Because, if you refuse, I will have but little use for

any other favor you might wish to grant me."

"I have never refused you anything in the world you desired in the whole course of your life, my son, and why should I begin to refuse you now? Now speak not in riddles but tell your mother your desires."

"Mother, I wish to marry the beautiful Aphrodite

and I desire your consent."

The pallor of the son's cheek was more than transferred to the mother's. She visibly trembled with agitation and would have fallen if not supported to a seat by the aid of her son. With one hand she covered her

brow and eyes and sat silent.

"I had no intention nor desire to bring this much trouble upon you, my mother," said Willy, and then continuing slowly, he said, "I shall drop the subject with you if it is so painful that it may cause you a fatal shock. If fatality be involved, let it fall on me. I shouldn't care to live much longer in this world anyway if the sunlight is to be taken out of it and I must grope in aimless and eternal darkness."

By this time Mrs. Vanderwenter had recovered control of her senses and understanding, and was deeply pondering the import of his last words and the unnatural, the desperate, calmness of her son, and as a mother

only could, she measured the depth of his feeling and

sincerity.

Willy continued, "We will say no more about it, mother. Your refusal is final and that ends it all for me. But never mind, we won't say anything more. Good-bye, sweet mother," and the boy kissed his mother tenderly and calmly and started away.

"Come back, Willy," said Mrs. Vanderwenter.

"Are you sure you know what you are asking?"

"I think I do, mother. For the most beautiful woman on earth."

"Do you know that she was imported into this country by Commodore Tibideau?"
"By the commodore?" queried Willy.

"Yes."

"That's impossible," said the young man.

"I will prove it to you by Mr. Ward McIlroy him-

self. He is in the drawing-room."

"Mother, what you say is impossible. The commodore is a noble, honorable man of the old school, and

will not bear false testimony."

His mother replied, "My confidence in Mr. McIlroy is as absolute as the rock of ages, and if what he says is not true, I am done; my duty as your mother and a member of society is performed and you have my consent. Come with me now and see Mr. McIlroy. And together they repaired to the adjoining suite.

Upon entering the room where Mr. McIlroy was seated, Mrs. Vanderwenter delicately stated the nature of her interview with her son and then proceeded to say: "Mr. McIlroy, this is my only son, and the heir to the Vanderwenter estates. I have never in my life refused him an expressed wish that lay in my power to gratify. I know that my son is serious in the request he now makes, and I refuse it only upon the condition that my reliance upon your statements of what the commodore said, is sustained, otherwise my son shall have

my consent, my aid, and comfort in this proposed marriage, nor will I ever again hear or entertain a word of

gossip or scandal against her."

Willy regarded his mother proudly and indulged for himself the confidence that the terrible condition would in some way be dispelled. Mrs. Vanderwenter continued, "In this important social and family exigency I stake all on the word of our respected leader, Mr.

Ward McIlroy."

Mr. McIlroy replied, "Madame, you cannot be deceived. I was in the full possession of my senses and vouch for the correctness of my statement that the commodore said he 'had imported her into this country,' and if I am wrong, then the senses are no longer to be trusted, my duty to the 600 is done, and I too will fortify your action in this matter, young man," turning to Willy, "with all the aid in my power."

Then said Willy, "Come, mother, and Mr. McIlroy, come now with me and we will forthwith interview the

commodore."

"I may not go, my son, but Mr. McIlroy and your-self may, and report to me, when you deem proper, the result."

CHAPTER X

THE INTERVIEW

THE commodore was still engaged with his entertainment of the functionary of the Chinese Empire when he received the two cards of Mr. McIlroy and Willy Vanderwenter.

"Oh ho! he's come again, and undoubtedly with his second this time. Good! Show the gentlemen up."

"Here, Li," he continued, "can't you second me in this little affair?" The Chinaman's almond eyes opened widely for a moment but closed again. The commodore went to him beseechingly and attempted to wake him into consciousness. "But here, you must. He's here with his second and I wouldn't, under the circumstances, cause a minute's delay, especially as I pushed it on him in the first instance. Li, you must."

Again Li's eyes opened and closed.

"Why, confound you, wake up," this time giving the

diplomat a sturdy shake by the shoulders.

The functionary awoke with a start, stared into the distant future, recognized the commodore once more, and relapsed into slumber with the bland smile upon his broad face of a setting sun in times of peace.

"What shall I do," cried the commodore, now thoroughly aroused. "I know," and a confident expression beamed over his glorious red face. The whistle shrilled—the nondescript appeared. "Bring the bumpers. Got to brace him."

The bumpers came, were discharged and steamed; upon indication by gesture the nondescript set about pouring the contents down the throat of the somnolent Chinaman, which he did alternately with his own throat

preferred, while the commodore was religiously gulping down his own, deafened by the tumultuous roar and

blinded by Niagarian mists.

Just at this juncture the visitors entered. The commodore had not yet observed them. Rubbing off his face with his handkerchief, he closely inspected the Chinaman. That functionary breathed with the calmness of another world, undisturbed by the copious overflows that had descended by way of his open collar. Gazing at him for a second, the commodore said, "It's no use, he's evidently gone." As he turned from the diplomat, he saw the gentlemen, to whom he bowed with the utmost gravity, saying, "Gentlemen, welcome, more than welcome. Mr. Vanderwenter, the gentleman," bowing stiffly in the direction of Mr. McIlroy, "could not have put his affairs in better hands. You are a member of the club, and, by thunder, on your account I won't kill him. I'll only wing him, but I'll be obliged to do that."

Willy could not comprehend this, but assented in a gentlemanly way to what he supposed was the immediate humor of the commodore, biding his time later on

for the introduction of the object of his visit.

The commodore rapidly pursued: "But, my friend, you find me, as a gentleman, on this occasion, in a very awkward fix; my friend whom I had expected to second me, Mr. Li Hung here present, is, as you see, temporarily hors du combat, and I may add, very suddenly, and as I have just ascertained, entirely beyond revival even for the few moments necessary for the transaction of our little business. In this exigency you will grant me, I trust, a moment's delay, just a moment." Then studying the ceiling fixedly, "Yes, just a moment. I have it." He paused, the shrill whistle sounded twice, a sailor appeared. Writing a line on a card the commodore said, "Take that to Mr. Delnot, my illustrious neighbor, and request him to come at once." Turning with much relief to Willy, he said, "Of course you

could not proceed without a gentleman present in my behalf without laying yourselves open to criticism, as

you readily see."

The cold, distant and stately style of the commodore toward himself, taken in connection with what he was saying, and prior occurrences, caused it to dawn very vividly on Mr. Ward McIlroy that the commodore was contemplating an affair of honor, and that, too, on the spot. The reference to seconds and his plea for time and the necessity of avoiding compromise of the characters of the parties to the transaction, while not understood by Willy, were overwhelming evidences of the commodore's interpretation of the visit. He began to see that the commodore took it for granted that he himself had returned to resume the difficulty and to end the dispute tragically. Therefore, to prevent any such misunderstanding, Mr. McIlroy straightened himself up to his full height and with super-dignity looking upon the commodore, said "Commodore, you misunderstand the object—" He could say no further, in thunder tones the commodore shouted:

"It is not possible you address me directly, sir?"
"You do not understand," resumed Mr. Ward.

"I am glad I misunderstood the gentleman," bowed the commodore temporarily placid. "He can only address me, in this stage of the difficulty, through his second, Mr. Vanderwenter. Communications through him will be duly considered upon the coming of my second, Mr. Delnot, who will be here presently, I trust, and until then, as you know, the rules of propriety forbid further discussion of this little matter."

Ward McIlroy now began to regard the man as completely mad and his own situation as desperate, and also began to regard the condition of the Chinaman as suspicious and perhaps a victim of the madman's terrible hallucinations. He too prayed inwardly for the coming of an additional sane outsider, and, under the madman's injunction, was obliged to refrain from com-

municating to his perplexed friend these apprehensions

that filled his mind with torture and suspense.

"We may not," continued the commodore sententiously, "discuss our little matters here, but when Mr. Delnot arrives you, Mr. Vanderwenter, and he, shall make all arrangements. I leave it to you and to him. The instruments are here and it won't take but a few seconds to assume position and to honorably settle the little matter."

"But I must protest," said Willy, upon whom began to dawn the existence of a singular condition of affairs between the commodore and the Society chief-"I

must protest that-"

"I can't accept your protests," said the commodore, with a confiding smile. "I know it is not entirely customary, but so great is my confidence in you and Mr. Delnot, that I don't care to be present at your conference, and will concede every wish of your principal, for immediate action. Ah! I hear some one coming. Good! it is our friend Delnot. Welcome, Delnot." greeting him cordially. "You are acquainted with these gentlemen. So glad you came at once. Important matter. I confide everything to you, gentlemen. Mr. Vanderwenter's principal wants satisfaction immediately. You, Mr. Delnot, will concede everything and secure prompt action right here. Do this as my second, and you, gentlemen, will be best suited to hold your conference in the bamboo cabin-next suiteyou know it, Delnot. Now go in there and talk it over. Quick action, Delnot," closed the commodore, as the two gentlemen were half led, half gesticulated, by the commodore toward the folding door.

"Oh, don't leave me here alone in this room with

him," ejaculated Ward.

"Eminently correct! the gentleman's right. Not good form perhaps for the principals to be vis à vis just yet. Eminently correct. I will retire," and thinking of the accident of the morning, he added, "but please to be here when I return." And away he strode

with stately dignity.

"I certainly wish to remain and to avoid any further encounters with the madman," said Mr. McIlroy, as the commodore slammed the great door behind him and disappeared.

"I tell you, gentlemen, the man is mad as a March

hare," continued Ward McIlroy.

"His conduct is certainly very singular," chimed in Willy.

"How does this all come about?" queried Delnot.

"Why, this morning, suddenly, and without provocation adequate or at all, he claimed to be violently insulted by me and forthwith produced those weapons which you see still lying on that table, for the purpose of 'settling the little difficulty,' as he called it. Fortune favored me by a temporary absence from the room on his part and I made my escape. Now he evidently thinks I have returned, with Mr. Vanderwenter as my second, to resume the affray, and he leaves the matter to be speedily arranged for a combat, with Mr. Delnot as his second. And so inflated is he with this hallucination, or perhaps with the effects of that terrible beverage that we saw him imbibing when we entered, that he will listen to nothing that might dispel his illusion but insists upon this mad and desperate encounter."

"Well, what led up to the controversy between you

and him this morning?" asked Delnot.

"The controversy arose in this wise," answered Ward. "We were talking about this lady they call 'The Aphrodite,' and he said, to be precise, that he had imported her to this country from England—now I won't be positive whether it was England or the Isle of Guernsey, or what other country—it might have been the East Indies when I come to think of it—but I am positive he said he had imported her into this

country and that 'she had cost him twenty thousand dollars.' I won't be accurate as to the amount—it might have been ten thousand dollars."

A rich, humorous smile, unobserved by the others, began to glow in Delnot's face as he began to take in

the situation.

"You called on him to make inquiries about the lady, having seen him in her opera box, did you not?" asked Delnot, his face still luminous with quiet humor.

"Exactly so; as a society functionary charged with the care of the most precious flock known to the Amer-

ican continent."

"What information did you receive from him?"

"Very little. He said she was the handsomest craft, or creature, or something like that, in the world, and dashed on to talk about foreign countries and finally ordered a pagan sailor of his to bring in that infernal beverage, that I, nor no one else in civilization, ever saw before, and by courtesy I was obliged to inoculate myself with that villainous poison—which, by the by, may have ended the career of this honorable member of the Chinese Embassy," pointing to Li, who was now entirely wrapped "en Morpheuse." And continuing, he said, "It was during this part of the conversation that he made the statement which I have repeated and by which I am prepared to stand, upon the peril of my life with a sane man, though not with a madman."

Willy had been a silent listener to this conversation between his friends. As Mr. McIlroy closed he said seriously, "And I am particularly anxious that the statement as repeated by Mr. McIlroy be fully explained, so far as it relates to the lady in question."

Another suffusion of humor spread on the lips of Delnot—but, as before, unnoticed by his serious asso-

ciates.

"What do you think about it, Delnot?" asked Mr. McIlroy. "What shall we do with this wild man?"

"I think we had better call him in and ask him the

direct question, whether he said so and so, or not."

"It will be of no use. He will come in fizzing and sizzing like his own infernal beverage, and refuse to listen to anything," said Ward, who really preferred a less direct and more representative way of solving the question.

"I think not," said Delnot. "At any rate, suppose

we try it?"

"Very well, but for goodness' sake remove those

weapons out of sight," said McIlroy.

Delnot laughed a little as he concealed the weapons behind a curtain. He said, "I think I know where he is and will bring him in without a word, and at the proper time you, Mr. McIlroy, must ask the direct

question." Saying this, Delnot left the room.

In a few moments he returned with the commodore punctiliously on his arm. Bowing to all, Delnot said, "Gentlemen, it devolves upon me to open up this preliminary interview agreed upon by the seconds hereto" —this language evidently met the approval of the commodore—" and while it is always the duty of a gentleman to expose himself, when required, to the chances of mortal combat, it is also his duty, before taking the life of another, to fairly ascertain the cause of war so that it may not hereafter be said that the combat was not for just cause. Now, I understand that the cause on this occasion arose out of a conversation that occurred this morning between the commodore, my respected principal, and Mr. Ward McIlroy, my respected chief. In that conversation, it is alleged, the objectionable words were used, and, as a second in these proceedings I have consented, contrary to custom and precedent, to require Mr. McIlroy, personally, and in the presence of us all, to propound the question that will present the main issue between the parties hereto."

The great frame of the commodore gave evidence of impatient emotions, but nevertheless the justness of

Delnot's remarks, notwithstanding their want of precedent, had their due weight, and he remained silent.

Mr. McIlroy, forgetting all else but the accuracy of the statement he desired to repeat, said with pallid dig-

nity:

"Commodore Tibideau, excuse me, but did you not, at this place, on this day, state in my presence, that you had imported her into this country from England, or the Isle of Wight, or from the East Indies, I will not be positive from what country, but will be positive that you said you are the first person that imported her into this country, and that she cost you twenty thousand dollars—I won't be accurate whether you said twenty thousand or ten thousand but at any rate, a good many thousand dollars?"

The commodore looked queerly, as he answered: "That's true, in part and substantially. I said, I am the first man that imported Hur into this country and that I brought Hur, not from England or the Isle of Wight, but from the East Indies, and that she cost me considerably more than twenty thousand dollars, which last I ought not to have mentioned. But who disputes

this statement?"

"I do," slowly and deeply breathed Willy, his mild blue eyes shedding upon the commodore a cold, unconquerable ray of steel.

"Dispute me!" cried the commodore, again enraged,

"must I wing my young friend, too?"

"Hold, gentlemen," said Delnot. "One dispute at a time, Commodore. You have intrusted your affairs to my hands. Leave them with me entirely or I must resign." This threat had the right effect in view of the difficulty he had had in promptly securing a second and the commodore remained silent if his bosom did heave and his eyes flash fire.

"Gentlemen," continued Delnot, "we have now two disputes to settle instead of one, but let them come in

their order."

"Our dispute is practically settled," suggested Ward McIlroy, "as he admits his guilt"—a roar from the commodore—" or rather his acknowledgment. ought to end it."

"No it don't," vociferated the commodore.
"Gentlemen, I am astonished," said Delnot. Then turning to the commodore: "Again I say I must re-

sign."

The threat of resignation was conclusive. The commodore winced, for, from his standpoint, under the circumstances, now to lose his second was to lose all hope of an affair. An armed neutrality was momentarily restored. The commodore addressed himself now more calmly and with stateliness, to Delnot, "May I ask the gentleman one question?"

"Of course you may, and it is incumbent upon him to answer as freely and as fully as his knowledge will per-

mit," said Delnot.

"Then," said the commodore, "recurring to the same conversation alluded to by him, I would ask him if, in reply to my question what he thought of her, he did not say that 'she was a wolf.'"

"Indeed I did," replied Mr. McIlroy.

"You did, did you?" now said Willy, "I, sir, now and here challenge and deny the base insinuation," for he was angered at the duplicity of his friend and his

cruelty toward his inamorata.

"Bravo," cried the commodore, "there's a man knows what he is talking about-been outside of the city. But don't hit him, Willy. Leave him to me, I'll wing him directly this matter is settled. I have first choice."

Ward was now much terrified at finding himself beset on all sides, and for no sound reason so far as he

could understand the situation.

The commodore continued: "The idea of a man calling her a wolf, when I consider it the greatest achievement of my long, and I trust, honorable career, that I discovered her in the East Indies on my last voyage and am the first man to introduce her to my friends in this city, regardless of expense."

"What do you mean, man," now cried Willy, whose perplexity and passion had at last reached an unwonted

climax for him.

"I mean that my hold is full of it, my cabin even is stocked, have some here, and except you, my friend Willy, the Chinaman yonder is the only man I have found that knows her as she is."

Willy now stood dumbfounded.

"I'll show you all," said the commodore. The whistle shrilly sounded, the nondescript instantly appeared. "Bring the bumpers, five," said the commodore, holding up the fingers of one hand. As before, the nondescript reappeared with the same gigantic decanters; the muskets popped like the discharge of a battalion, the phiz of five steam engines rushed through the room. Under the magnetic compulsion of the commodore, whose example they were to follow evidently for instruction and explanation, five faces were buried in mists and four, if not six, throats made musical by gurgling, for, as before, the nondescript repeated in partial draughts his experiment upon the functionary. When they had all finished and stood regaining their normal lung power, a strange thing happened, the keen eye of the commodore detected it: "Behold," he cried, "the miracle, Chinaman Redivivus, he who was dead has come to life. Here, this gentleman, Li Hung, knows what this is," holding the now empty, huge glass before him, the commodore cried, "What is this Li?" The functionary opened his eyes, blandly smiled, and uttered the monosyllable "Hur."

"Her, her! who does he mean?" gasped Willy.

"Why, hur, hur. I thought you knew her," replied the commodore. "The great East India beverage, imported by me on this trip for the first time in this country." "Oh, I see!" said Willy. "You call this wonderful

decoction 'her.'

"Yes," said the commodore. "That's its name in its native place of vintage, in the Jung-pa-tha of East India."

"Thank God for this deliverance," said Willy.

"We may well thank God for the greatest beverage ever, I believe, introduced to the gentlemen of this age," returned the commodore, misconstruing Willy's thankfulness.

"And you had no reference to the Aphrodite, the

beautiful Aphrodite?"

"Reference to her? No, not that I know of, my reference is to Hur, H-U-R," replied the commodore, spelling each letter.

"Well, Mr. Marplot," said Willy to Mr. McIlroy.

"What have you to say?"

"My senses have deceived me-I am no longer sane.

I perceive the awful mistake."

- "What mistake?" queried the commodore. "Is it possible that there can be an explanation after so serious a difference between the gentleman and myself?"
- "The mistake," now interposed Delnot, "is a very natural one and in every way explicable. It arose from the commodore's idiomatic use of the word her. Do you understand, Commodore?"

"No," replied the commodore. "I can't see it. I

demand my satisfaction."

"Commodore," said Delnot, "in the use of the word 'Hur' Mr. McIlroy applied your remarks about importing, etc., to the beautiful Aphrodite, whereas in truth and in fact, you applied the term to this delicious and wonderful beverage, a rational mistake of terms and pardonable among gentlemen."

"How pardonable, Delnot, or how natural?" objected the commodore. "You might as well call this oriental functionary here a liar because his name is Li,

and hang him because his name is Hung. Is such an

application of language natural or excusable?"

"Your illustration is fair enough, Commodore," said Delnot, laughing, "but I, as your second, let me remind you, am the judge, and under the circumstances, and in view of that ambiguity of language and that uncertainty of intent which is an inherent part of all human conduct, I must construe the explanations mutual and declare this affair amicably and honorably adjusted by and between each and every and all persons concerned."

"Well, if I can't wing him," said the commodore, sotto voce, "we'll have some more of hur." The whistle shrilled once. The nondescript appeared, the command was given, "Bring the bumpers, five." The nondescript reappeared and the decoction was disposed of as before, only with more eager zest by the commo-

dore's guests.

CHAPTER XI

THE ISLAND

On the Atlantic coast near the Florida shore there exists a number of little islands, which like sentinels seem to stand guard for the mainland against the violence of the huge ocean that perpetually thunders on the sandy beach. Back of these islands are found rivers and inlets, often connected with each other and with the sea, and sometimes extending far into the inland. These inland rivers though tortuous and frequently narrow, generally retain their depth, and the navigator who reaches them after successfully passing the bars and dangers of the outside ocean, finds himself in a charmed area of safety and beauty. The tall palms and vine clad oaks cluster close to the edge of the deep water, and surround the vessel with a bower of mosses and wild flowers.

It was in these labyrinths of safety and repose that the buccaneers of early times found an asylum from their foes and the dangers of the sea, and hither they retired to enjoy with unrestrained license the fruits and spoils of their prohibited vocation. Here on the deep green sward, shadowed by the dense foliage, the pirate spread his highly colored fabrics plundered from the commerce of the world, and reclined upon them at ease while he quaffed the rarest wines of the vintage or whispered love to some willing captive.

Such was the inner shore of one of these islands in particular. It was somewhat larger than the rest, and of the shape of a crescent. The outer edge or front beach convexed toward the sea, and the inner shore was fringed with dense groves. Near the center and masked

by the shrubbery were the ruins of an old fort, unquestionably the remains of an ancient piratical stronghold. Not far from the fort and on the very edge of the natural forest were other huge piles of ruins of imported stone, once the home probably of the buccaneer chief. The condition of the stone showed that the building had been dismantled, not by time, but by forceful design, perhaps in calculating revenge for some terrible deed committed there. On one side of this ruin was still growing in unkempt confusion and the abandonment of semi-tropical vegetation, an umbrageous grove of orange and lemon trees.

The perfection of coast climate is to be found upon these islands. The gulf stream and warm white sands unite their influence to temper in constant degree the atmosphere of winter, so that it might be truly said

of the island as by the Hyperborean:

"I come from a land in the sunbright deep
Where golden gardens glow,
Where the winds of the north becalmed in sleep,
Their conch shells never blow."

The summer climate is scarcely less salubrious; and the soft, balmy, cooling breeze of the ocean seldom fails to bring its messages from the deep to the refreshing

shades of the answering groves.

By a singular accident the currents of fashion have deflected travel from a knowledge of this Peloponnesus of the American coast, and the navigator generally gives this part of the Atlantic a wide berth for fear of

a heavy gale and a lee shore.

It was to this comparatively unknown region that Harold repaired for solitude, and there he sought retirement from that world in which he had been so great a favorite. Health, beauty, wealth and friends had been showered on him without stint, the four greatest gifts to mortality, according to the Greek poet:

"The first of gifts to mortal man is health,
The next is beauty's matchless flower,
The third is guiltless and unfraudful wealth,
The fourth with friends to pass youth's joyous hour."

All these had been his, and at last without regret and still in the possession of health, beauty and friends, he abandoned the world that adored him, to seek in silent contentment the repose and solitude of an ocean island.

This island was Harold's by descent, and was of too little value to become an item of account in his thoughtless system of expenditure. Some years before, attracted by the charm of the place, he had built a substantial cottage on the front beach and established a small plantation. But the superstitious negroes dreaded the natural solitude of the ocean and groves. They declared the island was haunted, and gradually departed to more thickly settled neighborhoods. But two aged men and their wives remained at this time, who cultivated the gardens and looked after the premises. The faithful John refused to be separated from Harold and followed him into the retirement of the island.

Daily might Harold be seen angling with his fishing pole in the shady and sequestered nooks of the back beach, or casting his lines far into the dancing billows of the front beach. From this source was supplied principally by his own exertions the freshest and most delicious fish that ever graced the table of an epicure. No less palatable was the flesh of the Spanish curlew, a bird that abounds in that vicinity. A little garden furnished the tender vegetables that were needed, and an occasional expedition to the distant settlement was the means of acquiring the few additional household

articles required.

Contentment took up his residence with Harold on this happy island, and became his daily and nightly companion. When Harold walked forth he experienced a calm satisfaction in all that he observed; the waves of the ocean broke on his ear with musical rhythm, the sunlight glanced gleefully o'er land and sea, the evening came with mellow tints to woo the day to peaceful rest, and at night, fatigued with the harmless pursuits of the day, he, too, sank into peaceful rest, the sleep of the just, undisturbed by dread images of an evil past, or of wrongs committed upon others. The excesses of his youth had left no stain of crime or vice to torture his memory, or to turn sleep into a riotous impeachment of conscience. In the sleep of the wicked, memory ruthlessly tears from the past the horrible events of crime, and flaunts them in the charnel house of a terrified conscience. The wicked sleeper starts into wakefulness and calls for a light or for day, to enable him to stifle his memory by will power, and to distract his mind from the somber colors that suffocate the senses.

Harold had not been wicked. Deprived of all domestic and spiritual guidance, he had simply followed the natural dictates of one of his means and disposition. But his nature was pure and good, and this innate goodness passed unscathed through dissipations, which, while they were somewhat invidious, yet were always elegant and artistic, and never coarse, brutal or scandalous. His youth had preserved him from the baseness of the

voluptuary.

Therefore contentment came to him in the deprivation of his fortune, and the angel sleep blessed him with restful slumbers on his island of solitude.

CHAPTER XII

THE VISION

More than a year had been passed by Harold on this island of Contentment, when one day passing along the beach at an early hour in the morning, he noticed upon the sand marks as of some one who had just been fishing there. The tracings of the long line that had been cast and drawn in again more than once were visible upon the smooth beach. At first he thought that some of the members of his household might have been fishing there the afternoon before, but no, the tide which at its height must have swept over the spot during the night and was still receding, would necessarily have removed the marks, which evidently were quite recent; nor was it likely, from the known habits of his household, that any of them were playing Nimrod before dawn in the morning. Deeply interested, he inspected more closely for footprints, but in vain. "Is it possible," he said aloud with poetic fancy, "that some Nereid has borrowed one of my lines, and has been imitating for an hour's sport, the human art of fishing? If so, of course it is needless to look for footprints, for the sprites of the ocean are ethereal and not mortal, and skip as lightly over the sands of the they do over the waves of the sea, without trace. But what if it is a mortal that was fishing here, who is it and whence comes? I must make sure if any of my household were absent this morning; though I think not."

That day on his return upon inquiry he learned that no one of his few retainers had been absent from their homes during the night or early morning. "Therefore," he surmised aloud, as he sat after supper on the deep piazza, "it was either a Nereid or a human being. I hope it is the former." His mind reverted for a while to the pleasant occupation of the day, but it would come back to the thought of that spot with the marks of the fishing line traced upon it, and as he pondered he recalled, that of all the points along the beach, it was there the best fishing was to be had. "Of course," he said to himself, "the Nereid knew that," and later he added, "and so did the human being—if it was a human being, and that knowledge could only come from experience or instruction, unless it was accidental. We will see."

The next morning about the same hour Harold repaired to the same point of the beach to find there almost the identical marks. "It is plain," he said, "the Nereid or Nimrod is posted where to fish." But as before he could find no footprints whatever, or in any

direction.

At the same time on the following morning Harold returned to the same place, but the marks were gone, swept from the seashore by the retiring tides. "Nor has any visitor, ethereal or otherwise, been here this morning since the retirement of the tide," said Harold.

Again and again, on successive mornings, Harold sped to the curious spot, without success. "The tide has now changed," said Harold, "the bass will not bite

now. I must wait until the next opportune tide."

In about ten days thereafter, and for several successive mornings, the marks were there as before, without footprints; and then as before they ceased to appear. "How foolish I was," said Harold, "that I did not go there before daylight and perhaps execute a surprise. But if it is a nymph, I must have a care, for by the beautiful theology of the ancients, the mortal eye that gazes upon immortality becomes blind."

Carefully biding and calculating his right time, Harold cautiously, under cover of the darkness of night, approached the interesting spot. Anxiously he surveyed the surroundings but nothing was to be seen. It was as dark there as elsewhere and as motionless. "The nymph is laughing at me," thought Harold, "and will not appear," and he gradually turned his head in the direction of the ever sounding waves that broke now gently in ripples on the eastern shore. Orion, behind him, was slowly plunging into the western horizon, where, like Apollo, as the happy ancients believed, he would embark in a swift speeding vessel and traverse the circumambient ocean to start the following morn in his aerial race. "It is nearly time for Eola with morning zephyrs, to open the gates of the East through which the sun-god will drive. Ah, there's the first saffron tint that heralds his coming." These were the thoughts that filled his mind.

Hark! he hears something. And looking in the direction of his search, he sees speeding into increasing distance a dim and vanishing figure.

"Well," he said gently, "there's the vision; it is not a nymph, for I still can see. If unfollowed, it may return." But it did not return.

With plain view of daylight he inspected the place and found similar marks, though not so many, as on the previous occasions, but no footprints whatsoever.

"It is not a man, that's also plain," said Harold, "or his footsteps would be pressed on this sand, although quite firm. The garments that fluttered as she fled proved this also. I see, she had cast and returned the line a few times, when the first coming rays of light disclosed my shadow, and then she fled just as I turned. Well, I'll try it again."

The next morning found Harold at his vigils, but without results. "This time," he lamented as he turned his steps homeward, "I have seen neither the marks of the line nor even the specter." Nor did he any more.

It was plain now to Harold that the island was inhabited by this being, that knew the best fishing point and came and went upon the beach without leaving any visible manifestation of her presence. Perhaps, he thought, this was the ghost that had frightened the negroes away, and he concluded to keep his knowledge to himself, and to fathom if possible the strange and

interesting problem.

Daily for a long time he explored the most distant as well as the proximate portions of the island, the groves, the ruins, the vine clad grottoes, but in vain. His search yielded nothing but entertainment and an increased appetite. And one evening at dusk, as he reclined in a hammock upon the piazza, he said aloud with a smile, "I really believe this vision has possessed me with a spell. I seem this moment to be within the subtle influence of some unseen eye within you hedge. Hey there!" he cried. The slightest rustle of the leaves was heard. "Good," he continued, "I cannot be mistaken. Some one moved and has sped away. We will see to-morrow; the footing about that part of the hedge is soft and sandy and to-morrow will explain

this mystery."

Harold could hardly sleep so great was his impatience. and with the arrival of visible daylight he was in the garden and at the hedge. "At last," he said, "the mystery is solved," and then pausing—"No, not solved; the mystery is not solved, but just commenced. But unquestionably it is a human being and a woman, and with the foot of a nymph by this print, if nymphs have feet, but the mystery is, where on this island can she find a habitation?" The prints were those of a woman's foot, very small and well shaped, and soon disappeared on the firm ground. "Now I understand," said Harold, "the sand on the beach was firm enough not to yield to these little feet." His search was redoubled and as before without success, but often about the same hour in the piazza he felt as if some one were peering at him from the near hedge, and afterwards found the same footprints there. More than once he essayed to address the unknown presence, but nothing came of any of his efforts, and the mystery remained as before.

Then he wrote notes to the unknown nymph as he had begun to picture her in his mind, calling upon her to have no fear and to reveal herself, and pinned them to forest trees, sometimes distant and widely remote. The notes were always certain to be taken away, but no answer returned. Finally he said: "Now I have it; this child of Nature must be addressed in the language of Nature," and taking from the garden near by a japonica white and clear, he placed it beneath a certain favorite oak. On the next morning he found there in its stead, with the dew fresh upon it, a wild rose bud.

The exchange of flowers in time became regular and expected. This tree was in the grove on the inner beach close to the deep waters, at a point immediately back of the old fort. It became a favorite resort of Harold. He passed much of his time there alone, but conscious that a divinity not altogether careless as to himself, came there and breathed the atmosphere and sanctified the place, while she removed his flowers and

replaced them with her own offerings.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPANISH WILL

HAROLD'S existence upon the island was now not only one of contentment but one of active interest in the affairs of life and particularly in the mysterious personage who so successfully eluded his search. His sentimental imagination took pleasure in attributing to the unknown the possession of various agreeable qualities of person and understanding, but having never seen this person his sound judgment protected him, he thought, from too serious a committal of his feelings. He said to himself, "She may be aged and toothless and ugly, and while I have great respect for old age, I would have to laugh at myself for dodging around these trees and writing ditties to the superannuated; and if she is young and beautiful she might possess traits of character that would deter confidence and respect. She has the advantage of me. She has often. no doubt, seen me from the hedge near the piazza, and perhaps elsewhere on the island from her point of concealment. If modesty has restrained her up to this time, good sense now justifies an avowal of her identity."

He was walking in a favorite and shady bower on the back beach of the island and had scarcely finished the above utterance, when he was gratified to behold before him in the same path, and walking slowly in the same direction, the object of his thoughts. With quickened footsteps he drew near. The lady started a little for an instant, but did not seek to elude him. As he approached he noticed the almost fragile delicacy of the form before him and the gentle grace of her movements. He

hastened his approach and was about to address her, when she turned and paused, as he did also. An impenetrable veil covered her features.

"I trust I am not trespassing on your morning walk," said Harold, taking off his hat with a pleasant

smile.

She stood still and silent as a statue. Harold, embarrassed in his turn, repeated his question, this time very diffidently.

The figure relaxed visibly and bowing gently, she said in a voice as soft as the mellowest tones of the

nightingale, "No sir, you are not trespassing."

"I was afraid I was," replied Harold, "considering the long time I have been engaged trying to make your acquaintance without success."

"I didn't know but you were a stranger on this

island, and I don't know yet," she said softly.

"I am not a stranger on this island, though I have not before this time been here for several years. But

how long have you been a resident here?"

"I may not answer your question until I know more. If you are the heir and owner of the island,"—she paused as if expecting an answer.

"I am," said Harold.

"And your name is Harold Godwin," she said, her voice betraying the excitement of expectation.

"It is," replied Harold, now appreciating from the manner of her question that she was controlled by no

ordinary conventional motive.

"Then if you are Harold Godwin," she said slowly, "and I believe you are, it is you whom I wish to see and have wished daily to see for a long time, but I was obliged to be circumspect," and she made a bow to Harold which he could not construe, but in like manner returned.

"And now," resumed Harold, "may I ask you how long you have been a resident of this lonely island?"

"This and much more you may ask and I will answer,

but not now. We may not talk freely now." She paused as if for strength, and then continued, "Tomorrow I will meet you here. In the meantime," she paused again, and drawing from her bosom a parchment writing she handed it to Harold—"you will take this and examine it carefully; it concerns you as the heir of your father. All that is mentioned in that parchment and more is subject to your command."

Harold took the parchment, but was quite dumbfounded at the drift the mystery had taken; and was constrained to forego his impatience as she gently

bowed and withdrew through the sylvan glades.

On arriving at home Harold examined the document, which was many years old and written in Spanish, with an English translation annexed. It purported to be a will solemnly made by one Johannes di Granada whereby a large amount of personal property described, was absolutely bequeathed to Harold Godwin, and his heirs forever, with the request that suitable provision be made in favor of one Theo, an infant daughter of the devisor, and her heirs. The said Harold Godwin and his heirs were appointed by the will guardians of the person of the said Theo, after the death of the devisor and the father of the devisor.

A schedule of the property in diamonds, precious stones, gold bullion, gold coin, bales of laces, silks and oriental fabrics, great casks of silver, glass and chinaware of East India manufacture and other rare and costly products, in all figured up in aggregate

in value of many millions of dollars.

Harold's astonishment at these revelations was great indeed. What could it all mean! "This will," he surmised aloud, "was evidently in behalf of my father and his heirs. But why and wherefore. It is genuine I doubt not," examining the signatures and attestations. "And furthermore I have no doubt of the truth of her statement that this property still exists intact. Verily, truth is stranger than fiction." And he fell into a curi-

ous frame of musing for the rest of that eventful day. "Why does she keep her features concealed?" he asked. "Is she a veiled prophetess of Khorassan? Perhaps John may know something about this name in the will," he continued, "and I'll just call him and see. It'll do no harm if it does no good; and my faithful John would never say anything about this matter any way."

In response to Harold's call the faithful John entered the piazza in which Harold was then reclining in a ham-

mock.

"Take this paper, John, and look at it," said Harold, you will find it is a will purporting to leave my father

and his heirs a vast amount of property."

John took the paper and opened it reverentially when he heard the old master figured in it, and actually smiled at the import of Harold's words—the thought of fortune restored. John grieved deeply though he said nothing, at the loss of fortune that had overtaken the young master, and life on a lonely island was not becoming, in his opinion, the dignity of the great family with which he and his ancestors had been associated as proud and loyal retainers for so many generations. He therefore, as he glanced over the will, smiled as he said, "The paper must be all right, Mr. Harold, though I don't really know of my own knowledge anything particular about it."

"Do you happen ever to have heard in my father's time the name used in that document, Johannes di

Granada?"

"Yes, sir; I've heard the name; but I can't quite place it. Wait a minute sir, it seems to me there is some such name as that on some of the old silver. With your permission sir, I will look into the silver box. I think I know now the very piece that is so marked."

"By all means, let us find it if possible," replied Harold with animation. In a few minutes John returned and handed Harold an old handsome silver cup

with gold lining and of curious workmanship, on which was engraved: "To Harold Godwin from Johannes di Granada. In lasting acknowledgment." Harold

took the cup and began to study it attentively.

"And another thing comes to my memory, Mr. Harold, about that cup. To the best of my recollection it was about ten years ago or perhaps fifteen years ago. One evening, late, a tall, dark man who gave no name or card, accompanied by a little girl, called on the old Master at Hillstone, and remained as guests there one night, and I recollect now, for it struck me as strange at the time, that the master while he was entertaining the stranger that night called for that very cup and drank his wine out of it."

"No doubt that was Johannes di Granada," said Harold. "What sort of looking man was he?" asked

Harold.

"He was a tall, swarthy man, with black, piercing eyes."

"Did you ever see him again?" asked Harold.

"No, sir; nor did I ever hear the old master say a word about it, from that day to this." Continued John: "Does Mr. Harold think that all this wealth that is to be restored to the family by this will, is still in actual

existence and can be reached at this late day?"

"I don't know about it being restored to the family," said Harold with a smile, "but I have no doubt of its existence substantially as set out in the document, and that it is in safe custody. But I don't know about our right to it, and really don't care much about it except as a curiosity, I'm not thinking about that. What is wealth, compared with the quiet of this island?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Harold," said John, "the island is good enough, but the old master's name was a great power, and I would like to see the young master own again at least Hillstone, the home of his ancestors."

"I don't know but what you are right about Hill-

stone. There is a just and honorable sentiment in what you say, and Hillstone is the only regret I have. But we must not permit even an honorable sentiment to make us avaricious, we may justly squander our own patrimony but we may not unjustly acquire the patrimony of others. My father, I think, would rather see me absolutely pauperized, than prosper at the expense of others."

"That's true, Mr. Harold, but gentlemen of your school sometimes refuse to claim their own, when they

ought to and are entitled to it."

"A suspicion of wrong or injustice about his possessions should be unendurable to a gentleman. The day has passed when our ancestors perched in their castles on the mountain tops, considered it becoming to swoop down on the merchant and the wayfarer and to rob them of their belongings. The refinement of the true gentleman of to-day demands, in the language of Euripides, that wealth shall be "guiltless and unfraudful."

"But, Mr. Harold," replied John, "what are you going to do about these gentlemen that Mr. Delnot writes speeches about, that make great fortunes in corners

and combines?"

"Now John, don't get me into politics; I can only take care of my own morals. Speaking of Delnot, has he been making some more of his great speeches?" asked Harold.

"Yes sir, I will bring you the New York papers, that come in a bunch every quarter when the boat goes to Uintah. I'll bring you the papers," said John, delighted to see his young master interested in something other

than the island.

"No, John, don't bring me the papers. I have not read a newspaper once since I left civilization with its cares and contentions, and I shan't now. When one slumbers in peace and contentment, why should he awaken himself by reading the crimes, calamities and painful vicissitudes of everyday life as they appear in

the great journals of this country, and concerning some of which my friend will undoubtedly speak. No, it is wiser to be ignorant. But John, in a few days I may learn something more about this curious will, and now I must go and set my night lines on the back beach." And so saying, Harold arose from his hammock and

passed through the twilight.

John gazed after him, and said, "happy be the day when the Lord will send back to the old house the wealth and greatness of the past, and I feel in my bones that there is something in that old Spanish parchment. But Mr. Harold, he cares as much for water," and he picked up the document from the floor where it had fallen and placed it in the room of the young master.

CHAPTER XIV

HIDDEN TREASURE

The next day Harold repaired to the old tree on the back beach. There he found that she whom he sought had already preceded him. She was seated on the grassy bank at the foot of the great tree, and was attired much as before, in a long, flowing fabric of rich texture held together at the waist with silver clasps; her features were concealed as before by a veil. As Harold approached she arose and bowed to him with easy grace, and motioned him to be seated near her. Harold thought he perceived evidence of great languor in her movements.

"I hope," began Harold, "that this beautiful morn-

ing brings to you good health and good spirits."

"The morning is indeed lovely," she replied, omitting all reference to the latter portion of Harold's query.

"I think this island enjoys a favored climate. The winds of winter are tempered and the gales of summer are always cool; and the sunlight nearly always streams upon it even through the rifts of the storm clouds, when the rest of the firmament is lowering."

"No doubt some day the sun will cease to shine upon it, and the clouds will be darker because before then

they have been brighter."

"You must believe in compensation on the part of Nature," said Harold leaning against the tree, as if for support. They both remained silent for a few moments.

"Come," she said, "my first duty is to take you to the cave," and she arose with suddenness. "Perhaps

I am delaying too long."

"You are not delaying at all. What have we to do with time here?" replied Harold, arising and trying to be gay, despite the solemnity of his companion.

"We have much to do with time," she said seriously,

" follow me."

Harold followed silently. The figure before him was frail and he began to notice that she walked rapidly for a few moments at a time and then quite slowly, and with footsteps almost tottering, and then again as if summoning resolution anew, she would start forward afresh. She picked up in her path an oaken staff and at times leaned heavily upon it.

"Are you ill? Can I be of any assistance to you?"

he asked.

The veiled figure replied calmly, "Not yet," and

walked rapidly on.

Finally coming to a clump of very thick underbrush and oaks near the old fort, she pointed to an almost hidden stone.

Harold removed it. Beneath appeared a large, flat stone. Again she pointed. With some effort, this stone also was removed, when a third stone, still larger, appeared. With very great effort on Harold's part, this massive stone was also removed, and at his feet to his great surprise there opened a firm set of stone steps descending to a subterranean chamber below. Descending the steps, they entered this chamber, which was filled on either side with boxes, anchors, flasks, hogsheads and chains, indiscriminately thrown together.

At the further end of this chamber, she pushed to one side a panel in the wall and a secret door opened into a larger well ventilated and tolerably lighted apartment. Taking a lantern from the wall she lighted it, and the rays of the light disclosed still more clearly, a large ware room, filled with casks, hogsheads and boxes. "These boxes are made of cedar and cypress," she said, "and recently I examined some of them and

found their contents perfectly preserved. Many of the fabrics they contain were made by hand among the Orientals, and are many of them among the lost arts of manufacture. They will be prized for their rarity. You will find in this chest some laces more rare and costly than anything now to be seen in France or Italy. Once," she said with a half-suppressed sigh, "I was fond of laces." She continued—"the silks in many of these chests are worth their weight in gold. But come," and she led him to another panel. A door opened upon a chamber. "This," she said, "is the silver chamber, so called because all these boxes and casks are filled with coin and bars of that metal; and here," traversing the chamber and opening another door, "is what is known to ourselves as the gold chamber. These chests are filled with gold in various forms. These two chests "-pointing to two in particular-"are filled with precious stones and costly jewelry. My father used a few from this chest "-opening one of them-" but the other which he told me is by far the more valuable, and long ago belonged it is said to a Persian ruler, remains untouched."

Harold beheld a thousand dazzling rays of variegated light, blazing from the varied riches of the opened chest. He was a connoisseur of beautiful stones. He plunged his hand into the beautiful mixture, and the colors of Nature's rainbow were eclipsed as the rays of light fell upon the stream of flashing scintillating splendor that poured in living magnificence

from his hand.

"Beautiful! beautiful! beyond expression," cried

Harold.

"Oh thank you," said his companion, for the first time with some warmth. "I can't tell you how pleased I am to hear you admire them. I feared you wouldn't fancy anything or care about them."

"Oh who could resist admiration for such beautiful colors and effects. Look!" And not catching

the drift of her remark again he dived both his hands into the wonderful collection and caused to pour again the rich stream, when as before the colors of the rainbow were paled by the comparison

"Where did they come from?" asked Harold almost abstractedly and not yet recovered from the surprise and pleasure of the beautiful display with which

he was so suddenly confronted.

"It is too late now to ask where they came from. It is probable that they came almost direct from the Asiatic countries, and that no part of them ever had ownership either in Europe or America, until they reached the islands in the Caribbean sea. Such of them as show European manufacture, and I think I recognize early Venetian work on a few of them, had returned to their Asiatic owners, before they started on the journey that has landed them in the Western Hemisphere."

"They must have been the property once of some

Oriental potentate," said Harold.

"My father said they were wrested by his father from pirates in the China sea a great many years ago."

"Beautiful! they are beautiful!" reiterated Harold.

"It pleases me so much to hear you say so," and continuing, she said, "These things are all yours by an indefeasible and rightful title. I have now performed the most important part of my duty. I feel my strength rapidly failing, but I can meet the end with complacency."

At these words Harold was greatly alarmed and ten-

dered his assistance.

"Thanks no, not yet. Follow me if you please." And she retraced her steps to the inner chamber, at the extremity of which she pressed a button as before and a door opened upon a dark gallery. Along this she proceeded followed by Harold, for quite a long distance. Another door opened, when they entered a charming suite of apartments well lighted from above

and handsomely furnished. "We are now in and under the ruins of the old buildings, which have been utilized for the purpose of giving these apartments the necessary air and light. By ascending the little staircase"—pointing to some steps leading to an upper window—"you will find yourself on a level of the upper ruin, and from there you may readily descend to the orange grove below."

During this conversation, she several times paused as if to gain strength for the effort she was sustaining.

Harold again interposed. "I fear—I am sure that you are taxing your strength in some way beyond endurance, and again I must beg of you to command me and let me assist you."

"Not yet," she replied, "though my duty is nearly

done."

Harold longed to ask her questions concerning herself and her antecedents and strange residence on the island, but the manifest weakness of this strange person deterred him from then imposing upon her the burthen of a conversation prompted by selfish curiosity.

Seeming to divine his very thoughts she continued, "I am the Theo spoken of in the will, and the only living descendant of my family. My mother, father and grandfather have all gone to another world. My mother died, when I was an infant, of incurable consumption and that malady has been transmitted to me with hereditary certainty. This I have known now for a long time, and of late I have suffered greatly from the internal ravages of the disease. I feared I should fail to see you. From early youth I have been taught to regard your father and his family with reverence and affection, and to see that the directions of the will were conveyed to you and the wishes of my father and grandfather obeyed, has been to me a sacred and of late an anxious trust. My family for more than a generation past is under a great and lasting obligation to your father. It was due to his noble generosity that my father and grandfather were saved from ignoble persecution and death in a foreign country among strangers and removed from their own resources. Your father, a sojourner there at the time, hearing that they were Americans and in prison, placed at their disposal unlimited means and exercised his great influence whereby a fair and impartial trial was secured and their innocence of the charge of piracy clearly established."

"So you can understand now the devotion of my family to yours transmitted from father to child, and also you can understand in view of my declining health, the anxiety I have possessed to personally meet you and discharge the great trust imposed upon me by the intention of my ancestors and the possession of the will." She paused a moment as before, and then continued,— "and now I have done. My duty is performed, and I am at peace with the world."—Another slight pause. "Will you grant me a request?" she said, turning to Harold.

"Anything in my power," he replied.

"Then if anything should happen to me now or hereafter, and it be in your power, promise me that this veil which conceals my features shall not for a moment be removed. Promise me."

"I promise," replied Harold, bowing his head sol-

emnly.

"Thanks," she said softly, "and now," she continued, "you tender me your kind services. To-morrow I shall need them." She paused and pressed one hand to her heart for a moment. She continued,—"to-morrow if I shall not meet you by the dancing waters beneath the great tree, come here if you will, and look for me there in that chamber, and until then adieu if not farewell."

Harold was reluctant to leave the strange figure in this strange mood, but there was no misunderstanding her manner or intention. It was plainly her wish to be alone with her thoughts and that he should withdraw; so following her intent he slowly withdrew, ascending with bowed head the little staircase, at the top of which he passed through an open door, and in another moment

stood among the orange trees of the grove.

On that evening as he lay in his hammock musing on the events of the day his fancy carried him back to the reading of his childhood and scenes of war, rapine and bloodshed, of graceful beauty and intrepid bravery, floated in his imagination from the pages of Marryatt and Mayne Reid, and he wondered at the strange vicissitudes of fortune that seemed to connect by a link of tender humanity, the destinies of his own illustrious house with those of a buccaneer chieftain—perhaps.

CHAPTER XV

A STRANGE DEMISE

HAROLD was punctual to meet his appointment on the following morning. As he arrived at the place he noted the charm of the soft bower and the pleasant sunshine and rippling waters. The balmy air whispered

among the leaflets and sighed in the deep foliage.

Suddenly he noticed that a passing cloud had cast a shade on the vicinity, the whispering and sighing of the breeze ceased, the waters became motionless and a deep impressive calm stilled the atmosphere. Harold's sensitive nature was affected by the transition. "Why this sudden change," he asked in low tones; his very tones seemed discordant, and he sunk again into the silence which awed him.

In a little while the cloud of the moment had passed away, the balmy air whispered and sighed as before, the waters laughed again and the pleasant sunshine

and charm of the soft bower returned.

"Ah," cried Harold, relieved, "The spell is gone." And this time his voice accorded with the lovely sweetness of all nature, its movements and its rythmic sounds.

For some time he waited, placidly inhaling the fragrance and absorbing the views of bounteous nature, and at last he said wonderingly, "why doesn't she come?"

Ever and again he glanced along the shady walk that led to the great tree where he expected her, and as he looked he pictured the languid grace of the gentle figure and wondered how beautiful the features must be that should properly harmonize with so much sweet-

ness of voice and grace of action.

"She must be beautiful, and this I will realize when she shall with approved confidence revoke my promise, and permit me to behold the unveiled beauty of her features."

Flattering himself with this hope he became again enwrapped with the beauty of natural surroundings and his thoughts floated with the winds and smiled with the waves, and heard soft voices and gentle laughter from the flowers and the trees and the waters, sounds only heard by the pure and the guiltless, and in his daydream he saw in the place of the dark cloud, a bright cloud floating heavenwards and bearing on its bosom a

veiled angel.

He started into reality, saying, "she comes not; surely something has detained her." And then after a few moments' study he continued, "is it possible that the weariness I thought I observed in her manner yesterday, is more serious than I naturally supposed?" After a pause he resumed to himself, "Of course, deprived as I was of all observation of her eyes and complexion, it would be difficult to judge of a person's physical health. Now is it possible that all through her efforts yesterday, she was under a strain to resist the mortal attack of some dread manifestation of disease?"

Alarmed at the bent of his thoughts, Harold now swiftly betook himself toward the subterranean residence.

Through the orange grove he passed to the window still unclosed, and thence down the little staircase to the chamber of his former audience. There he stood for a moment, and all was silent as the grave. He looked toward the door indicated by her; it was open. He entered. Lying apparently asleep on a luxurious divan was the figure of the veiled woman.

Her attire was one of the purest white silk, and at

her bosom she wore the rosebud which Harold had given as was his wont, at the meeting before. On the tiny feet were soft white slippers, and her hands and arms were gloved in white. Her features remained veiled beneath the rarest of old gold lace.

"She is sleeping, overcome perhaps by the exertions of yesterday," whispered Harold to himself in a way to calm his apprehensions. "And should I awaken her from restful slumber?" he questioned within. And he stood gazing with increasing interest, and a strange

alarm that continued to assert itself.

Leaning forward he took a hand in his. A thrill passed through him. It was not the hand of the living but of the dead.

With powerful emotion he felt that the graceful image would rise no more, that the warm breath that animated the gentle body had sped away and left it chilled forever, that the swift-footed figure that flitted along the sands was fettered and still, and would no more listen to the music of the waves or join the chorus of the winds; and yet, he thought, perhaps loosened from the retarding habiliments of the body, her spirit now floats with the aerial clouds. And the day-dream of the morning recurred to him, and again he beheld the veiled angel borne heavenward on the bosom of a sunbright cloud. "It was, when the calm of this morning occurred," he said to himself, "when nature suspended her happiness, that the spirit of beauty wended its way to the sunbright cloud."

Profoundly and for a long time, Harold contemplated this beautiful image of death, and as he gazed upon the silent twin brother of sleep, he was fascinated by its restful quiet, so calm and peaceful. The shock of horror that at first disturbed him had passed away and given place to sentiments of sympathy and kindness. "Sleep" he said "sleep And God bless the tender

"Sleep," he said, "sleep. And God bless the tender soul that sought the sunbright cloud this morning."

With the help of the faithful John the veiled image

was in due time and with tender ceremony laid to rest near the great tree which had become so dear to her in life. And the winds sang their songs to the trees and the waves laughed to each other and to the shore, and yet a cloud had fallen upon their loveliness, and though a new angel had then sparkled in heaven, the body of

the veiled image had fallen to the earth.

After the solution of the sad mystery, Harold returned to the accustomed pursuits of his life on the island. He traversed as before the same localities for fish and game, and strolled through the same beautiful vistas of woodland and seashore. The same balmy breezes blew, and the same sun shone with tempered shafts. The same ocean thundered or rippled on the same sandy shore.

But a cloud had passed over the landscape and its shadow still remained. "What," asked Harold to himself, "has my eye lost its delight; can I no longer hear the happy music of the winds and flowers; has my alertness of frame lost its buoyancy to respond to the inviting atmosphere? Why are the stars of night, the saffron of morn, the meridian light of midday, the

tinted evening, all blighted as with a pall?"

And on and on he went daily seeking the fish of the sea and the wild birds of the shore, but really seeking rest. Sleep that once wreathed his head with smiles and flowers now abated her quiet and became wary and broken. The bright dreams gradually disappeared and somber ones came. The physical powers deprived of their accustomed restoration, grew languid and impaired, and his whole beautiful system became "like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh."

John was not an unmindful observer of the condition of the young Harold, and became much grieved to be-

hold the sad change that had come over him.

"I used to think," soliloquized John, "that this island was a poor place for Mr. Harold to live, but I now see it is not so much the place as the mind that makes the

difference. I would be willing to give all the wealth in that old pirate's cellar to put the master back where he was a few short weeks ago, before he fell under this spell."

About this time Harold entered worn, tired and haggard, from a long tramp in search of he knew not

what

"I'm sorry to hear it Mr. Harold. I wish I could take some of your worry on my own old shoulders."

"Thanks John," said Harold with a faint smile, "when you so express yourself, my strange burden is lightened by the knowledge of the affection of at least

one devoted heart."

John could have cried with happiness, but he knew the undemonstrative nature of the family. John knew the Godwins felt affection deeply, seldom uttered it, and never showed it. He noted the momentary relaxation of Harold's features as if the pain of the spell had gone.

"I think Mr. Harold," said John, "that perhaps a

change of scene would help you some."

"No," said Harold, dejectedly, "no mere change of scene would help me. Besides John, where would we go? We have been everywhere. There's nothing new under the sun." And he relapsed into silence as he wearily laid back in the hammock, his hands clasped over his forehead.

"Do you remember the time we were in the Philippine islands and you acted as second for the commodore in the duel with the Spanish captain?" resumed John, adroitly endeavoring to divert the sufferer's

mind.

"That seems so long, so long ago," wearily replied Harold.

"And remember the captain insisted on swords and the commodore on pistols, and the seconds settled the dispute by allowing each his favorite weapon, pro-

vided the distance and position should be selected by lot, and the commodore through you won the choice. Don't you remember Mr. Harold," continued John, warming up at the merry recollection.

"Yes John I remember, but it seems so long ago—like another world," and he repeated the words "like

another world."

John paused. Harold continued, "you believe there's another world beyond this John, don't you?"

"I believe there is, Mr. Harold,—the old master be-

lieved it."

"How do you know it John. How do you know

my father believed in immortality?"

"Because," replied John, "on his death bed—and I was there—he told my father who held him in his arms, he said to him with his last words, 'there is nothing here, it is there,' looking to heaven."

Harold was strangely and deeply affected by John's solemn reply, but he said nothing further for quite a

long time.

At last John ventured to break the silence. "I think Mr. Harold, a trip to the old place, Hillstone, might help you; don't you think so?"

Harold brightened up visibly. "I think it would John. I have been thinking of it for some time past."

John was beginning to become elated at the thought of happy days to return in riches and splendor, and he added with as much show of enthusiasm as his perfect etiquette would permit, "and the young master might open again the old hall of his ancestors."

"Yes," replied Harold calmly, "as a hospital."

If lightning had struck John he could not have been more completely dazed. "The idea of the ancestral hall of the Godwins being turned into a hospital." He thought—"The home of elegance and gaiety turned into a sanitarium for artistic bloodshed and inventoried disease. Those halls that reverberated to music and festivity to echo to the groans and lamentations of the

lame, the halt and the blind. Oh horrors! such an idea. First rather burn it up with its honored and delicious memories than turn it into the foul-odored bedlam of disease."

John looked closely at the master. He was sitting as before with both hands clasped over his eyes. A terrible thought occurred to John, "his mind is certainly wandering, overcome by want of rest. What shall I do for him?" he asked himself anxiously. "What can I give him to strengthen the nerves. Ah," he thought, "a little absinthe," and he went to the sideboard and poured out a little green glassful for his master.

Oh, unhappy thought! Unhappy John! who just then turned the current of most sacred things, and the events of a life for good or evil. He brought the little glass of cordial to his master.

Harold put it to his lips and emptied the contents.

A few minutes later a subtle and delicious feeling of contentment pervaded Harold's senses. He arose to his feet invigorated and restored to his former self. "Why John, that is a wonderful antidote. I feel like myself once more. How did you come to think of it?"

"The old master," replied John, "used to take it occasionally, though very rarely. He used to say, pardon me Mr. Harold, that it stimulated the senses but

damned the soul."

"It is certainly a delicious stimulant of the senses. Look John, how beautiful now is the blue of the heavens! How deep the green of the ocean!" Then breaking off he paused a while and resumed, "I must go out, where nature is undisturbed by humanity. I must hear again the soft voices of the wind and listen to the loves of the wild flowers," and he departed toward the grove.

The next day, and the next, and the next very much the same thing occurred. Harold came in worn and tired. John handed him the subtle mixture, and again Harold went out rejoicing to enjoy the solitudes of the groves. Nothing more was said about the hospital.

It was after one of these afternoon beverages that Harold said to John, "I think it would be as well for us to return to Hillstone."

"A good idea Mr. Harold, unless you change your

mind."

"I shall not change it," said Harold. "When will we start?" inquired John.

"You shall start first John, you can arrange things," replied Harold. "You can go to New York and see Mr. Delnot and settle everything about the titles, mortgages, if any, etcetera. You will also transact all business for me with our old banker, Mr. Lancaster."

John was greatly rejoiced to hear this decision, which embraced the recovery of and return to, the old

palatial mansion.

"John, bring me one more of those little glasses."

This request dampened John's ardor for a moment, as complying he said, "remember the old master's

comment on this stuff, Mr. Harold."

"Thanks John, I shall be careful." And soon after he fell asleep in the hammock and dreamed of the old glorious halls with flashing lights and soft voluptuous music, sparkling wit and the gaiety of friends; of Delnot, of Warren, of Aphrodite—the beautiful loving Aphrodite,—and a hectic flush arose on his brow and his lips were again wreathed in the smiles of sleep.

Oh benign narcotics, that transpose the mind from the misery of reality to the dreamy beatitude of the ideal. Who would not rather dream deliciously than live miserably? Though during those dreams a soul

is seduced from hope.

CHAPTER XVI

SOCIETY PREPARED

WHILE the events hitherto recounted were occurring on the lonely island, events of equal magnitude in the lives of the parties interested were transpiring in the world of gaiety and fashion of New York City.

As we have seen, owing to the wit of Delnot and to the blunders of the commodore and of Mr. Ward Mc-Ilroy, the ostensible objections to the marriage of Willy and the Aphrodite were duly removed, and the family influence of the Vanderwenters and the active co-operation of Mr. McIlroy, conspired to silence the questioning tongue of scandal, and to make the now accepted marriage one of extraordinary note and congratulation for society at large as well as the parties concerned, for so it was now ordered by society edict.

"Yes you know," said Mrs. Vanderwenter to Mrs. Oldton who had called, "I tell Willy the only objection to her that we can find is her beauty, which makes her notable wherever she goes, so notable indeed that the public and the press claim the right to create ova-

tions and write her praises."

"It is bad, too bad," said Mrs. Oldton, who had not

yet caught her cue, "and Willy is so retiring."

"I don't know that it's so bad, one might as well be distinguished for great beauty as great wealth, and she has both, you know,"

"Oh has she? that is quite charming-both beauty

and wealth."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Vanderwenter, "and then she has qualities of a christian character which we only dis-

covered yesterday: Rev. Mr. Wainwright told Mr. McIlroy that the beautiful charitable institute on 57th street known as 'The Retreat for Homeless Girls,' is founded and maintained from her personal revenues alone."

"My; what extravagance!" answered Mrs. Oldton, "but charity is becoming quite fashionable in the 600. But that is going too far for a young woman. It would sound better for an old man."

"Why would it sound better for an old man?" cu-

riously asked Mrs. Vanderwenter.

"Oh just an idea of sound—it would sound more likely and fashionable, that's all," replied Mrs. Oldton.

"Well I can't see the difference," continued Mrs. Vanderwenter. "As for Willy, he is very happy, and Marie Leona and Violanita are delighted with their beautiful sister-in-law to be. As soon as the marriage has been celebrated, the couple propose an extensive European tour. They will leave here on Willy's new steam yacht and will among others visit Willy's cousin, the Duchess of Dundy in England, and probably our old friend, the Princess of Montcaron in Paris. The Earl of Crossfut says her beauty will create a tremendous sensation in London and Paris."

"Oh, how beautiful! Indeed she's charming, beyond question, charming, Willy indeed is to be congratulated," replied Mrs. Oldton, now overwhelmed and convinced by wealth, splendid titles and beauty, though the two former were sufficient for her judgment. "Well," she said, "my dear, give Willy my congratulations and the fiancée my best love"— and old Mrs.

Oldton departed.

As she left Mrs. Vanderwenter said, "This settles everything. That old gossip will carry the news to every pavilion in society, and what beauty, wealth and fashion cannot control in alliance with our family and Mr. Ward McIlroy, is beyond the reach of social influence in this city."

Just then Willy entered and greeted his mother tenderly.

"Are you happy Willy?" she asked. "Yes, my good mother," he replied.

"You look delicate my son," as she noted the paleness of his complexion. "Are you not afraid to marry this remarkable woman?"

"No, mother, I don't reason on the subject at all. I accept my present happiness, and believe it will con-

tinue."

"A mother's heart will have forebodings any way I presume," she said, and after a slight pause, "I suppose immediately after the wedding you will take a trip abroad?"

"Yes mother, I have ordered my yacht held in readi-

ness for the voyage."

"And," she continued, "you must forthwith visit

your cousin, the Duchess of Dundy."

"Very well, mother, if that is your wish, though I'm not particular about it, nor do I think Aphrodite cares much."

"That is not the point," continued his mother, "it is not our feelings or wishes that are to be considered, but social effects. It will sound well, and has a grand social effect, and as Mr. Ward McIlroy would say, 'becomes a social function."

"Very well mother, we'll visit the Duchess of

Dundy."

"And I hope the Press will herald your coming as it

should that of distinguished persons."

"No danger about that mother," replied Willy, "the Press never fails to record the movements of the Aphrodite. I wish they would leave a fellow to more privacy; but if you say it is also a 'social function,' why it's all right."

"Yes," continued his mother, "in these days persons must have notice, and the Press is both a convenient and inexpensive method of gaining distinction,

in fact in this country it is the only way. In Europe of course a title serves the same purpose, but here that royal prerogative belongs only to the Press. Oh if we only had here an exclusive and noble source of title in the place of the ignoble and pandering Press."

"I don't know," replied Willy who was little interested in these flights of his mother, "I think the Press as an average treats us well, and often better than I de-

serve."

"How? what do you mean?" queried his mother.

"I mean, if the young man who reported my speech at the railroad dinner the other evening, had not made one up for me, I would have appeared in print in a very

poor light."

"You don't understand me Willy. I mean that the Press will herald your visit abroad which will give eclat there, and the knowledge that you are visiting the duchess who you see is a titled person, will give you entrée and distinction and will strengthen the social foundation of your matrimonial venture here, where some persons might otherwise cavil and find fault."

"What if they do, they need not disturb me, need

they?"

"My dear Willy, it is useless to explain to you. You do not understand social finesse, or ethics as Mr. Ward McIlroy calls it. Just like a good son, obey my injunctions and all will be well."

"I think I can do that mother—visit the duchess,

is that it?"

"Yes," replied his mother, smiling. "That is the

first point after the marriage."

She secretly felt the social weakness of this alliance and purposed to use her connection with titled people to

dazzle inquiry and halt criticism.

Soon after her son withdrew, she continued to herself, "When my niece married the Duke of Dundy she bolstered up his fallen and bankrupt fortunes; now as a just return I shall borrow the lustre of his plumage

to cover up the defects of this alliance, and make his title

a useful ingredient in my family affairs."

Just then entered Aphrodite accompanied by Marie Leona and Violanita. Marie Leona had entwined her arm around the waist of the beautiful woman. Mrs. Vanderwenter kissed Aphrodite on the forehead and said, "My child if you had come a moment sooner you would have found Willy here," and then continuing with a smile, asked—"what spell have you thrown over him that makes him so devoted a lover?"

"I might as well ask," said Aphrodite in return, "what spell Willy has thrown over me to induce me to take the doubtful step that trammels the independence I have heretofore so thoroughly enjoyed. I can only attribute it to the sincerity of the devotion, which you

have observed, he proffers so unreservedly."

Here Marie Leona interjected with the freedom of her age, "Mama I know why Willy loves Aphrodite,

because he loves her, that's all."

"Silence Marie Leona," said Mrs. Vanderwenter, with a little show of austerity, "young ladies of your age are not presumed to know anything about such things."

"Yes we do though. I can tell it by their eyes. You just ought to see how Lord Conwort looks at Vio-

lanita."

"Silence I say, Marie Leona," said her mother, secretly pleased that another title was looking in the direction of her family.

"I think Miss Marie Leona ought to be silenced."

added Violanita.

"Just before you came in," said Mrs. Vanderwenter, addressing Aphrodite, "I was insisting to Willy that immediately after the wedding you should both visit my cousin, the Duchess of Dundy, at her castle in England. She is as you doubtless know, in the highest set, in fact I believe you might say the Court set in England, and she will see that you have full entrée

there. You must understand, that the duke was very poor indeed and his father before him, and his estates were so incumbered, that he could obtain no revenue and they could not be sold, indeed I am told they were abominably poor, but the duke enjoyed a title, and with my niece's aid, and moneys settled on him at the marriage, he has been enabled to raise the encumbrances, and rebuild the dilapidated castle, until now it is one of the finest in England, and as a consequence of his renewed prosperity, he has become fully recognized in the set of which I speak. So I wish you and Willy to visit the duchess on your trip."

"Why certainly, if it will please you," replied Aphrodite, "though for my part in my voyages I have been more concerned about the beautiful scenery of Scotland and England, than the peculiarities of their

social sets."

"But now my dear, I hope you will give more thought to the social question. Not to be, but to seem is now the question. We, you know, I mean my husband's family, cannot look very far back in family genealogy, at least with any great success. Nevertheless it happens that we are flattered and sought by the most distinguished of the world. I mean titled persons, though, at the same time, I admit, frequently the most needy, and it becomes us to be fully of the same set, as it were, you see."

"The dukes I have seen here in America," again interjected Marie Leona, "are awfully insipid, with not half the dignity of our old colored coachman who was

trained by some gentleman down South."

"Again silence, Marie Leona," said Mrs. Vander-wenter, and she continued, "it matters not how insipid or inferior to our own young men, or actually, truth compels me to say, it matters not how (unhealthy or infirm?) they seem to be, they are the fashion for the fast set, and hence they are of use to us both here and abroad."

Aphrodite nearly shuddered at the plainness of speech and the horrid facts discussed in the presence of her daughters by this fashionable mother-in-law.

Mrs. Vanderwenter continued: "Of course there are some of our young men who are eminently eligible. would rather see one of my daughters united to, for instance, Mr. Harold Godwin than any of these dukes. His family is as old and distinguished historically as most of the crowned heads of Europe, and is entitled to a coat of arms, which he says it is not good taste to blazon under a republican form of government. What he means by that I don't know. But Harold Godwin will never marry; he is an elegant dilettante and a dreamer."

At this mention of Harold Aphrodite's eyes grew

brighter and her cheeks ruddier with animation.

Mrs. Vanderwenter continued: "Also there is that old Commodore Tibideau. His grandfather when tendered a title abroad declined it, saying that an American gentleman could not recognize any higher title than the simple one he already possessed of gentleman."
"Why ma," said Marie Leona, "a girl might as well

try to marry a grizzly bear as the old commodore."

"Silence Marie Leona. Now all that may be very good for great historic families like the Godwins and the Tibideaus, but the recent families, like the Goldies and the Holdoffs and the Vanderwenters and a hundred others, have no history whatever, nor anything else but wealth. They spring more or less suddenly from commerce and adventure. They do not look back with repose upon their ancestry nor do they wish others to do so, so we must in order to stop annoying criticism and reminiscence, dazzle the public as well as ourselves with brilliant equipage and display, and of all things the most convenient now and quite easily purchased are titles; ah, they cover a multitude of sins, in a social way. Don't you think so?"

Aphrodite fully understood the bent of Mrs. Vander-

wenter's reasoning, but she replied, "The subject is entirely new to me in that light, but perhaps as one progresses in the experience of the fast set, one will become better informed." Secretly she felt chagrined at such sentiments. Upon the same sentiments she was excused and justified in any the wildest and maddest pranks of her life. She began to ponder on this line of fashionable reasoning. A little later when they were alone Violanita said to her confidentially, "Ma wants me to marry the Duke of Convort."

About this time other callers had arrived, one of them seemed quite excited at an accident she had met with.

"Indeed it's quite horrid," she said, "my carriage was delayed several minutes by a crowd of hoodlums,—strikers my coachman James said they were, and they howled and jeered at our crest and arms which my husband purchased last month and had blazoned on our coach. They are simply horrid creatures, and it seemed to me that James was in sympathy with them, for he drove to the right or to the left just as one of them, a kind of leader, directed. Indeed they were horrid and should be bastinadoed for presuming to stop a lady's carriage."

If the speaker could have observed the peculiar twinkle in the eye of the waiter who was handing her some ice, she might have surmised another sympathizer. "The horrid things," she continued. "Strikes are getting too frequent I think in America. I would prefer to live on the continent of Europe, especially in Germany, where the laboring classes are held in check by a standing army officered by the nobility, and taught

their duty."

The ladies sipped ices and chocolate, for by this time quite a number formed the party, when Mrs. Larry Demore said, "Did you observe the news in this morning's Journal?"

"I can't say that I read the paper this morning,"

answered Mrs. Vanderwenter.

"Well, it said that the queen had returned to Bal-

moral castle."

At the mention of the name "queen" almost a reverential genuflexion took place mentally if not physically in the assembly. Some of these had met the queen and some had not, but to all she was a being to be worshipped with a kind of awful social fear.

"So she has returned to Balmoral castle. What a lovely place!" said the lady who met the strikers and who had, by the way, never met majesty, and continuing she said familiarly, "and I wonder how the

old lady's health is."

"I understand from Mr. Ward McIlroy, who gets daily bulletins giving her majesty's temperature, respiration and pulsation, I believe, that she is well," said

Mrs. Vanderwenter solemnly.

"Oh, how awfully thankful we should be," continued the lady of the strike, "my husband is well acquainted with a member of that absurd Bimetallic Conference Commission, or something like that, that visited England some time ago, and he has promised through them to get me introduced to the queen, when they go again."

Mrs. Vanderwenter said gently, "If you had the advantage of alliances with the noble families you would not have to rely on the dubious presentation of

questionable politicians."

This nettled the first speaker, Mrs. Donio, who replied, smiling more sweetly than she yet had done, "We have not all an alliance with the Duke of Dundy, Mrs. Vanderwenter, and how is the dear old gentleman's health?"

"About as well as usual," said Mrs. Vanderwenter

not seeing the stab that was coming.

"What! no better? When we saw him in Baden last summer the physicians had amputated part of his nose and they said the whole roof of his mouth had melted sweetly away. Oh, how I grieve for the poor,

young duchess. The duke's health must be a source

of constant annoyance to her."

The blow struck deep, but Mrs. Vanderwenter sweetly responded. "The duke has entirely recovered and was at the queen's reception last week," laying

stress on the words queen's reception.

Mrs. Donio felt that Mrs. Vanderwenter had the advantage, and she experienced an earthquake about her own social position in assailing one who was admitted to the queen's presence. She hastened to apologize, but made matters worse by saying:

"I thought the duke was out of favor with the queen, in fact my husband said he had been ostracized

by the queen for fear of contagion, and-"

At this Mrs. Vanderwenter was shocked beyond measure. "Oh," she groaned, "what would Mr. Ward

McIlroy say."

At this conjuration Mrs. Donio became still more alarmed. "I didn't mean to say that the duke's case was incurable or that he would contaminate all the nobility," said Mrs. Donio.
"Call Mr. Ward McIlroy! call Mr. Ward Mc-

"Call Mr. Ward McIlroy! call Mr. Ward Mc-Ilroy!" cried Mrs. Vanderwenter, and she burst into hysterical tears. At this stage of events the company

separated and withdrew in great consternation.

On that evening in her dressing room, while Aimee was disrobing and robing the most beautiful of creatures, Aphrodite, thinking over the events of the day, said, "Aimee, I have done some bad things that you know and some bad things that you don't know, and I have about come to the conclusion that there are two persons, the physical and the moral, and I don't believe that I ever in my life made a more complete display of my physical person than Mrs. Vanderwenter and Mrs. Donio did to-day of their moral persons, and that too, you may say, in public. It was perfectly shocking. And as for the sentiments that that old lady expressed about marriage in the presence of her daughters, they

were simply awful. The men of the 'fast set' I have known a long time, and as a rule they are bad enough, but the women are worse."

Aimee paused a minute to dress Aphrodite's lovely

hair.

Aphrodite continued, "I saw the queen a couple of times when I was in London, and she is no doubt, or has been, a very charming old lady, and worthy every respect and veneration due her age and position, but the farcical adoration rendered by the women I saw to-day would be rejected by any respectable person who might become victimized by them. Speaking of the queen," and Aphrodite began to laugh, "Perry Delnot said that every time the queen's name was mentioned in his presence, Mr. Ward McIlroy moistened the tips of his fingers and made the sign of the cross," and Aphrodite laughed heartily at the bon mot.

"Of course mademoiselle is talking beyond my com-

prehension just now."

"If you had seen and could understand all that I am commenting on, it would not improve either your mind or your morals, Aimee," said Aphrodite.

"Does Mademoiselle mean to say that the morals of the great world where she has been, are below the man-

ners of a waiting-maid?" asked Aimee.

"It would seem so, from what I observed to-day," she replied.

"I thought the rich and the beautiful were good,"

said Aimee.

"The truly rich and beautiful are good, but I fear we are among mountebanks."

"Who are mountebanks?" asked Aimee.

"In your language they call them 'the nouveau riche."

"Ah," said Aimee, shrugging her shoulders and pursing her lips, "they are always vulgar."

CHAPTER XVII

THE WEDDING

It was a gala night. The great church flashed all over with electricity. It might have been taken for holy fire. Fashion was there of course, because it was a "function." Mr. Ward McIlroy was there, dignified and smiling. The bride and bridesmaids, each and every of them, had been within the scope of Worth's artistic influences. The groomsmen were the salt of the clubs. The reporters were charmed with the novelty and splendor of the decorations and lavished their praise on everything.

Delnot and Warren as usual were there and occupied seats of strategic advantage. "What a triumph for Aphrodite," said Warren. "She is marrying one of the richest men in New York, or indeed in the world, and all the 600 are throwing flowers at her feet and fig-

uratively rice, on the occasion."

"Yes, and the Press, if I mistake not by the journalists personally present, are engaged in the same business."

"What do you think of it all?" asked Warren, "you know all."

"It is as it should be," answered Delnot in a judicial tone.

"Do you think the gay favorite of the banquet duly

entitled to these distinctions?" asked Warren.

"Like Mr. Blaine, I will answer your question with a question. Why not?" Pausing for an answer, Delnot continued: "You are an old New Yorker, Warren. You know all these people and their ancestors, such as have any, what they came from, what they amount to, their true merit, manners and morals, and what actual good they confer on mankind—strip them of their wealth and Worth's dresses and the glamour of fashion, and wherein have they any advantage over the beautiful Aphrodite, beautiful, gifted, intellectual and charitable? By the Eternal! I think Willy is getting de-

cidedly the best of the bargain."

Warren did not answer for a moment, and then remarked, "Besides, Delnot, look at it from another point of view: What advantage had these people's mothers or grandmothers over Aphrodite? Why there is Miss Gooly, her grandmother was a high kicker at the old Bowery, and married her jockey husband, and together they fleeced their confiding friends out of the fortune that is to-day the basis of the Gooly respectability and millions. Then there is the third bridesmaid, Miss Wagstaff, why her mother before she married the banker is said to have played the role of L'Assamoir. Bosh! I will go no further."

"Yes," replied Delnot, "how readily one is blinded by great wealth and fashion. Now we, who know these things from our childhood, are scarcely able to recognize before our very eyes, the squalor and licentiousness of a past generation, when we see it bedecked in diamonds and Worth's costumes of a present generation. Now the chances are it took good and wholesome elements somewhere to produce Aphrodite, and we know the good and wholesome don't prevail among the

people we are discussing."

"After reasoning over the thing," said Warren, "I think we will agree upon all the conditions that Aphrodite has the advantage in the comparison."

"Decidedly," said Delnot.

At this time Mendelssohn's great wedding march was about concluded by the orchestra, and the beautiful ceremony of the Episcopal Church was begun.

"Returning to our recollections," said Warren,

"weren't the Vanderwenters, I mean Willy's father's family. Methodists?"

"Yes, and his grandfather entirely without ecclesias-

tical record of any kind," said Delnot.

"How does that happen, Mr. Philosopher and

Critic?" asked Warren.

"That's easy enough to explain," replied Delnot. "In this country, the Episcopal Church, on account of its solemn, showy forms and ceremonies, has become the fashionable church. It also had an advantage at the start in having among its members in colonial days the aristocracy and local titled persons of the country. This early prestige it has never lost, but on the contrary increased. A man, frequently, like Willy's grandfather, gets rich outside of the church, by means that neither the church nor respectability countenances. The next generation are generally found in some great popular denomination, like Willy's father, who was in his youth an elder in the Methodist Church; but when Willy and his sisters had imbibed the tastes of a fashionable boarding school to an æsthetic and discriminating point, we find the whole family occupying a front pew in the Episcopal church."

"I never thought of that before," said Warren, but it is unquestionably the fact. They are all now Episcopalians, when we know their antecedents in almost every case belonged elsewhere if at all. But is it possible that fashion in this day must regulate a man's

creed?"

"All general rules have their exceptions. The truly great old American families that stand like oaks, despise tergiversation, and continue to worship God in the manner of their forefathers, whatever that may be; but we are now witnessing and discussing another type of social development, a type which may be as ephemeral as the toadstool, or as lasting as the eternal granite, though I think not the latter for virtue and good-

ness are the only sure foundations of great and lasting social establishments."

"But these people would tell you that the early founders of European nobility were robbers and free-

booters," replied Warren.

"There is some show of historical truth for that statement, which is only partially true, however, and in a minor degree," said Delnot, and continuing, "but conceding it to be true, force was the motive spirit of those creatures, while fraud is the under-current inducement of these. The robber baron of former times who with his retainers charged down from his mountain heights upon his prey, was obliged to meet the risks and dangers of mortal combat, and in order to be successful had to possess in a high degree the quality of physical courage, an ingredient of prime importance in the constitution of a race or family and quite transmissible in the shape of strength of character to resist evil. But the robber baron, as the newspapers call them of to-day, is called upon to exercise only cunning, covin, deceit, or overreaching calculations by the aggregation and preponderance of wealth, whereby the belongings of large portions of society are secretly and stealthily transferred to himself and his associates. And this without any fear of physical discomfort except that of becoming a defendant in a criminal court. Though he escape the condemnation of the courts, he forever dreads an inspection of his transactions, and if he has a conscience at all, lives in the days of his reflection, ashamed of the tricky methods adopted—ashamed of himself and his fortune, bequeathing to the next generation either no conscience at all or the weakness of self conviction. No, Warren, nothing good comes out of fraud though there may out of force, for in the adopted words of many celebrated writers it is conceded, 'force is a lion but fraud is a little wolf,' and similar should be their progeny."

"As the consequence of your long dissertation, which

I admit I invited, we have missed the beautiful words of the ceremony," said Warren.

"Yes, but the words are always the same, though the

results are various," replied Delnot smiling.

Again the orchestra uttered its peans of triumph, and all society was about to pour into the sacred aisles to follow the procession of the newly dedicated social queen, when a little girl was seen advancing up the main aisle bearing in her hand a single, beautiful, red rose. The rose was so deep in color that it seemed to radiate its redness, and almost diverted attention from the child whose raiment was of the poorer class and not in accord with those around her. The inexpensive though neat white dress of the child did not escape the attention of the usher as he hastened to prevent a breach of etiquette and to overhaul the doubtful invader of aristocracy and sanctity. Just as he was about to succeed, Aphrodite, who had observed the approach of both, gently welcomed the coming of the child, and beamed on her one of those rare smiles that never failed to gild all within its reach with the happiness of sunshine. The child delivered the charge to the bride. Aphrodite in return tore from her bouquet a large white rose and gave it to the child, who, now smiling and delighted, holding up the white rose laughingly, tripped down the aisle before the young couple so airily and happily that it seemed to all who witnessed the scene as if some strange little herald had come from another world to escort the bride and groom to the threshold of the new world upon which they were about to enter, with an omen of good luck. But what meant the red rose?

As Delnot observed the incident of the red rose he said abstractedly, "I wonder if she is actually connected with them; but I think not."

"With whom?" asked Warren.

Delnot started as he answered, "Nothing, I was just musing."

The two young men floated with the surging, scented tide of charming humanity, bowing here and smiling there to various acquaintances, and took their coupé for the club, later to join the invited guests at the supper and at the ball.

At the club they found the commodore stalking up and down one of the apartments like an impatient giant, waiting for one of his attendants to fetch his gloves of a certain hue that he had forgotten at home at the last minute.

"Are you not going to the ball, Commodore," said

Delnot.

"I certainly shall; if my pearl colors don't come I shall simply wear white, that's all," said the commodore, and the old gentleman carefully inspected the elegant gloves in his hand and to be relied on in an emergency.

"You surely wouldn't go in those gloves, Commo-

dore?" said Delnot, secretly testing him.

"If the others fail, I certainly shall."

"But they are not the last colors," said Delnot.

"No, but they are close enough," replied the commodore.

"They might make you conspicuous," still urged Delnot.

"Ah, Delnot, that's serious. Do you really think so. I can't consent to be conspicuous or outré, but anything less I can stand."

"Commodore, I was joking. Your judgment is right. The colors are close enough for any gentleman, though less than a gentleman might fear to deviate a hair's breadth from fashion."

"Fashion don't annoy me at all, but you are satisfied they will not appear odd, are you not? What do

you think, Warren?"

"Commodore, I think like Delnot, they are all right."

"Well," said the commodore, "I used to rely on my judgment a good many years ago, but d—n me if the

gaudy dressing one sees now-a-days don't make me color blind."

"At any rate," said Delnot, "I presume those are your colors," as a small parcel was placed before the commodore which he immediately opened and contemplated with satisfaction. "And," continued Delnot, "the nice distinction we have drawn on this very important subject of color and taste we will have to bury

in the vast sea of trifling uselessness."

"Now Delnot, wherefore are you a philosopher?" asked the commodore. "But before you answer, I will ask you a conundrum that I got from Li Hung, and he says it's from Confucius, nor has it any personal application. This, 'What is the difference between a philosopher and a misanthropist?'" the commodore said with great interest.

"If Warren can't answer I surely cannot," said Del-

not.

"Can you draw the distinction?"

"I cannot," said Warren after a moment's cogitation.

"Well," said the commodore, "a philosopher loves the world and hates himself, and a misanthrope hates the world and loves himself."

"Admirable conundrum, Commodore," said Delnot

and Warren, both laughing heartily.

"I claim no credit myself, that is one of Li Hung's. But I have no great confidence in his wit or learning since the day he fell in the battle so easily." And the commodore laughed heartily at the recollection.

"By the by," resumed the commodore, "Delnot,

where is our friend Harold?"

"I don't know, Commodore; I would like to know

also; but he must be abroad somewhere."

"What say you, gentlemen, you are both friends of his, if he don't turn up soon, suppose you join me in a voyage of discovery and we'll find him, won't we?" said the commodore enthusiastically. "I wish he was here to-night," said Warren.

"So do we all," replied the commodore.

"Well, gentlemen, what do you say? It's nearing time, why not let us walk to the festivities in good old-fashioned style, it's not far—too far."

"Certainly," responded the friends.

"We don't get exercise enough anyway," continued the commodore. "We are getting too old and too blase to get either exercise or enjoyment out of dancing, and the little walk will do us good." This was said as the gentlemen, after making their final preparations, were descending the marble steps of the brilliantly lighted club house.

They had not gone very far when they were accosted by a shabbily dressed man for alms. Without hesitation each of the three gentlemen responded liberally and kindly and without question. As they had passed on the commodore said, "A certain great senator from California once advocated a change of the size of the silver dollar on the ground that after night he couldn't tell the difference between a silver dollar and a twenty-dollar gold piece."

"I remember him very well," said Warren, "but I don't think he applied that rule to giving alms, did he?"

"I should say not," said the commodore, "he was a prince in giving and in doing. The miners called him

King George, they say."

"I met him here several times, and on one occasion accepted his invitation to visit some great mines he owned in Dakota, and I must say he was a royal entertainer even on the frontier. We had at that supper the greatest variety of game meats I ever saw served at the same time, among others, buffalo, Rocky Mountain sheep, grizzly bear, elk, and others now forgotten by me, and our oysters came from Baltimore and were packed in ice and came by stage for three hundred miles through a hostile Indian country to Deadwood," said Delnot.

"Ah, that must have been unique. That's a feast I would have enjoyed. One gets tired of the common-place spreads of to-day. The same substance got up only in different shapes by the art of the cuisine and labeled with high sounding French names," said the commodore.

By this time the three pedestrians were drawing near the palace of dazzling light toward which they were wending their way. Suddenly a little flower girl emerged upon the scene bearing in a slight basket of wicker her tiny wares of single flowers and button-hole bouquets. "Will you have flowers, gentlemen?" she said.

"Of course we will," said the commodore, and turning to the other two friends before they could themselves act, he continued, "gentlemen select your bouquets; allow me."

Each took a single plain flower, which the girl deftly adjusted on their lappels. The commodore handed her a twenty-dollar gold piece and passed on with his friends. She followed them a moment with her eyes and remarked alond, "Those are the grand rich."

During the times just mentioned there were in a private room at the same club, three other gentlemen engaged in more or less animated conversation. One, the oldest man, was large and fat with a nose that was both long and broad. It might be properly called a proboscis. He was clean shaven and might pass for a priest, a butler or a senator, as you like it. His name was Gugenhein.

The next in age was a very tall, lank, lean man, with mutton-chop whiskers and a sanctimonious face. He, too, might pass for a parson, a butler or a gambler. He was called the Deacon.

The third, the youngest man, was what might be called pretty, with a light, black moustache and pink cheeks. His name was Prettiman.

In other respects these men were alike. They were

all multi-millionaires; their hands and feet and figures were roughly hewn and without symmetry, their noses were hooked and their eyes gleamed small and bright like those of birds of prey.

These eyes flashed brighter than ever with eager anxiety as the door opened and a young man, evidently a confidential messenger whom they were expecting,

entered hastily and without summons.

"What's the news?" they asked all in one breath.

"The President says you can rely on him," said the confidential clerk.

"Then we can buy sugar stock with safety," said

Gugenhein, still looking at the messenger.

"Of course you can. That's what I came to tell you," replied the messenger.

"But what if Congress kicks?" said Gugenhein.

"Congress can't help itself. The president has the patronage and the veto, and he cares no more about Congress than the average congressman cares about the dear people," said Mr. Prettiman.

"That's right," said the confidential clerk. "He said to me, 'I am determined in this sugar business. The public interest demands it. You may tell them that I

said so."

"If the public interest demands it we are safe to act," said Gugenhein with a guffaw.

"It's right and proper that the public interests should

be conserved," blandly smiled the Deacon.

"Shall I make the order for the syndicate at once?"

asked Mr. Prettiman.

"Of course," responded his two associates. "If he alluded to the public interest that settles it; it's always a sure sign of a strong private conviction with him," said Gugenhein.

Mr. Prettiman withdrew for a few minutes.

"Well, I must go," said the confidential clerk, moving toward the door.

"Stay a moment. Will you remain in the city tonight?" asked Gugenhein.

"I will unless something of importance for your in-

terest requires my earlier return to Washington."

Gugenhein and the Deacon exchanged glances, and the latter smoothly said, as he slipped a crisp \$500 bill into the hand of the confidential clerk, "Dear brother, amuse yourself in the city as best you can and accept this little antecedent to pay your expenses, as it were, for to-night," smiling. The confidential clerk departed smiling, and soon after the departure of the confidential clerk, Mr. Prettiman returned.

"Did you order the whole amount of stock?" asked

Gugenhein.

"I did," replied Mr. Prettiman.

"Let us trust in the president and in the Lord," said

the Deacon solemnly.

"Charge us up with our share of the expenses on that item to the clerk, and this little trick will make the syndicate at least ten millions in as many days, and

let us now go to the ball," said Gugenhein.

The three men arose, and leaving the private room where they had held their important conference, they passed through the brilliantly lighted corridors and parlors, and down the marble steps to the street below. As they were about to take their carriage, an old man, a beggar in tattered clothes, approached them and begged for aid.

"I have no change," said Gugenhein.

"You should be at honest work instead of begging. You might buy rum, and I cannot countenance immorality," said the Deacon.

"I can find no work, and I am starving," replied the man, whose skeleton form and glaring eyes confirmed

his words.

"You are a vagrant and ought to be in jail. I shall call the police," said Mr. Prettiman.

At this last, the poor creature fled away with fear of arrest, and the three entered their carriage.

"What a nuisance these beggars are getting to be,"

said Gugenhein.

"One cannot move without being accosted by them, and just think of it, right there in front of the club, in the full glare of the electric lights. I wonder at the fellow's audacity. We must not encourage such peo-

ple," said Mr. Prettiman.

"The only proper way to be charitable is through the church," said the Deacon, "and then the committee sees that only respectable persons and not vags or strikers get any of our money. Besides a man who gives through the church gets some credit for it, and strengthens his social standing as it were."

"They say that that young Harold Godwin was hor-

ribly charitable," said Mr. Prettiman.

"You own that grand Hillstone property now don't you?" asked Gugenhein.

"Yes, I bought it at the foreclosure sale," replied Mr.

Prettiman.

"Why, I thought Mr. Delnot, our congressman, bought it," said the Deacon. "I was at the sale and

heard it knocked down to his agent."

"So it was, but it is an easy thing to buy an agent," said Mr. Prettiman, "so I got it cheaper than to bid against him." And they all laughed at the neat trick.

"I expect Godwin's generosity broke him," said the

large man.

"I tell you," said Mr. Prettiman, "if I saw a clerk of mine give anything away for nothing, even to a beggar or anyone else, I would discharge him. I consider it a bad sign."

By this time their carriage had arrived as near as it could to the wedding mansion, which was yet some distance, by reason of the numerous carriages that crowded the brilliant thoroughfare. As the three gen-

tlemen alighted the same flower girl whom we already

have seen, offered the gentlemen flowers.

"How much are they?" asked Gugenhein, closely scenting her flowers to see if they were natural and

"One little bouquet for fifteen cents, two bouquets

for a quarter," replied the girl.

"I'll take two," said Gugenhein, carefully selecting as far as he could the brightest and freshest of the lot. Then carefully counting out the change, five nickels (a street car conductor used to visit his mother), he handed them to the flower girl.

The other two purchasers were less extravagant; they only took a bunch apiece, for which they carefully

paid the exact change each.

"Are you sure that these flowers are fresh and that they cannot be had cheaper from the girl on the next corner?" asked Mr. Prettiman, searching the conscience of the girl with his piercing eyes.

"I am sure," said the girl.

"If you have deceived us, beware! We will have you arrested as a common cheat," said Mr. Prettiman, looking as if he would devour her.

'You need not insult me," said the flower girl, and she dashed their nickels to the ground. The two passed

A dark form glided from an unnoticed nook and greedily seized the scattered money. It was the same old man that begged of them before the club house. He brought the money to the flower girl, and held it out to her in his trembling hand.

"Keep it," she said.
"Thanks," said the old man, "the insult shall not be

forgotten," and he rapidly disappeared.

As she saw the three gentlemen solemnly ascending the brilliant steps of the great mansion beyond, she said, "Those are the new rich, that, poor themselves yesterday, despise the poor of to-day."

And the girl, still stinging under the insult that was conveyed by the rude manner more than even the import of the words themselves, fell to weeping over her lot that a moment before had seemed so fortunate. And as she wept she thought of a widowed mother whose husband bravely died at his place of duty on his engine in the great Harlem railroad wreck, and of a crippled brother who was run over by a vehicle on Broadway in the mad race of Commerce against Time and Opportunity. If her father had died on a national battlefield, his age and wounds would have received a grateful country's beneficence. Why, then, should those that fall in the great battle of life, be abandoned to their fate together with their families by a thoughtless humanity?

CHAPTER XVIII

CORKS SWIM

"AH, there she is," said Delnot, as with Warren he entered the splendid reception room where the bride was at the time still receiving the incoming guests, and the congratulations usual on such occasions, however doubtful they may be.

"Warren," said Delnot, "just behold the grace that follows every movement of her head and arms like the distillation of aroma from some sweet flower swaying

gently in the morning gale."

"Don't get poetical at this time and place," laughed Warren.

"But who can help it? Beauty and grace will as naturally inspire sentiment as sentiment inspires poetry."

"With some natures," interposed Warren.

Just then Mr. Ward McIlroy cordially greeted the two arrivals. "Gentlemen, have you been presented to the bride?" said Mr. McIlroy.

"Not yet; that is, not this evening, yet," replied War-

ren.

"Come then, allow me the pleasure," and they bent

their steps toward Aphrodite and her attendants.

"Mrs. Vanderwenter," said Mr. McIlroy, with the mannerism of a courtier of the time of Louis XIV, "will you permit me to present my esteemed friends, Mr. Delnot and Mr. Warren," as each in turn bowed.

Aphrodite's grand, gracious smile fell upon these two old friends with the most disingenuous expression of unalloyed welcome, as she said, "These, Mr. Mc-

Ilroy, are also my esteemed friends; if we were in the Palace of the Medicis, with these present I would feel safe."

"Thanks," replied Delnot, "we trust we deserve your graciousness, but I must add, if a Beatrice had possessed your charms she would have discarded the cup and poniard." Mr. McIlroy here left them to be present at some other phase of the social function.

"He is quite poetical this evening, with a tinge of

melancholy," said Warren to Aphrodite.

"Come, cheer up, Perry," she said familiarly, "I am the one to be melancholy and Harold not here. What a queer thing this life is. I am in a maelstrom that bears me along."

"Then," said Delnot, "you must bear yourself so as to master your fortunes, and be a queen of destiny, as

vou are."

"I shall," responded Aphrodite firmly. Others came

and the gentlemen moved on.

About this time the three gentlemen, Mr. Prettiman and his two friends, had arrived. As they entered they and each of them seemed to blow himself up by some system of air compression like a frog, and got stiffer in every joint. They walked large, with a swagger and got into everybody's way, and their own way, too, for they every now and then nervously tripped over each others' toes and heels. They stepped on ladies' dresses and instead of apologizing pretended as if they had not. "Put on your gall now," said the Deacon to the other

two, who instantly got stiffer and more puffed up.

Mr. Ward McIlroy saw them and smiled sweetly on these corner-stones out of which he was endeavoring to build the fabric of great society. Mr. McIlroy's glance appreciated their situation and his smile was intended to restore their self possession.

"Am glad to meet you, gentlemen," he said warmly, as the three with great delight crowded around and indeed almost under the society leader, as the wandering chicken is gathered beneath the hen. They seized his hand and dwelt on it with unction.

Mr. Prettiman, who was the social leader of the three, said: "And we are glad to see you Mr. McIlroy. We have just made a little deal and if you'd like a corner of it, why I guess there is no objections," and he looked at his confreres.

The large man and the Deacon, reflecting that the corner could be pared down in private, and thinking that a tip at this time to the leader of society was opportune, quickly responded, "If Mr. Ward McIlroy will accept a corner, we concluded you know in our talk to let him in; I guess it's all right."

"Thank you, gentlemen, for your kind intentions. I leave that with you, but to-night devolves upon me the weight of social functions, and it pleases me to see the interest you take in them. Have you met the

bride?"

"I have tried often enough to meet her, but never could succeed in getting an introduction," said Mr. Prettiman. "Delnot, our congressman, promised to introduce me but has always got out of it some way or other."

They had about reached the neighborhood of Aphrodite, and Mr. Ward McIlroy gracefully introduced the two. It was his intention, immediately after the introduction, to move them on to some place of innocuous desuetude where they could remain safe and unnoticed; but man proposes and God disposes; a messenger called him to another point of the social melee and the general was obliged to leave them where they were.

Given confidence by the kindly manner in which Aphrodite greeted every guest, though a stranger, they composedly took advantage of the situation and aban-

doned themselves to their impulses.

"I don't go out much among ladies," said Gugenhein, "I am a banker, you know, and my whole time is occupied with the affairs of the bank. Your husband keeps a million on deposit all the time and I want to solicit your patronage—safest institution in the city, stood the panic of 1893 and never whimpered—in fact, had the United States treasury behind us—" with a cunning smile.

While the large man solicited patronage for his bank the Deacon pulled his long, lank fingers till the joints popped one after another, and Mr. Prettiman, who was now growing bold at his success in society, stood first on one foot and then the other and was anxious to get

in a word to the beautiful woman before him.

"Now ring off, old man," he said snickering. "He's a bull of the worst kind, never knows when to let up. He'll go all to smash some day, his bank and all. I'm a stockholder, in fact the biggest stockholder in your husband's railroads, and if it wasn't for me and my votes at the last stockholders' meeting we could not have got our people in at all. Willy will tell you about it. Willy is not as slick as his father, but he's got the money and the stocks, and ought to be able to hold control easy enough."

During all this speechmaking and self publication other guests had arrived and many were in waiting to make their devoirs to the bride, but these three men, each with a spread and swagger of three more, made an impassable circle of at least nine men. Mr. McIlroy was not there to clear this serious congestion, and these three persons, forgetful of all others, monopolized the

situation as completely as they did the markets.

Gugenhein, who was hurt at Prettiman's remark about his bank, the minute Prettiman subsided, hastily chimed in, "He says, madame, that I'm a bull and that my bank will smash up, but don't you believe him, and if I were your husband I would not place too much confidence in him, or he'll get left when he least expects it. These stockholders' votes are sometimes mighty uncertain, I guess so. And as for my bank, it is a United States Depository and I invite inspection from large

I hope you will open an account with depositors. us."

Fortunately, by this time Mr. McIlroy had arrived, and as quickly took in the situation. With the utmost serenity he bowed up to the three engrossers, smiled and bowed them into motion, and finally smiled and bowed them into a safe corner where their discussion of themselves and their corners would be less likely to annoy other persons. There he left them temporarily to their own company.

"How did we get here?" asked Gugenhein.

"Thought we were talking to Mrs. Vanderwenter," said Prettiman.

"The Lord only knows how it happens," surmised the Deacon.

From the corner to which they had been so delicately piloted a fine view was had of the ball room adjoining the grand reception room.

"My, look at the diamonds; there's a quarter of a million worth of diamonds on that lady's hair and

dress," said Gugenhein.

"That's Miss Vanderwenter," said Prettiman. met her once when I called on Willy about those railroad stocks."

"And who's that hungry looking little fellow walk-

ing with her?" asked Gugenhein.

"Who do you mean?" asked Prettiman.

"I mean the little party with Miss Vanderwenter; the little man with one eye-glass, that walks like a crawfish."

"Why, you ought to know. He negotiated a loan at

your bank yesterday," said Prettiman.

"By thunder! It's the Duke of Convort. I didn't know him. He's changed his clothes," said Gugenhein.

"Ain't you any better judge of human nature than to trust that man's face for five thousand dollars?" asked Prettiman, snickering at Gugenhein.

"His face is wofully lacking in godly qualities," said the Deacon.

"My judgment is with yours," responded Gugenhein, but if he don't pay the money back I'll get it out of

him."

"I don't know how," said the Deacon, "for our report on him when he first came was that he had no worldly goods whatsoever; in fact, he is bankrupt." said the Deacon.

"I can get it back, nevertheless, at one hundred per

cent. per month."

Prettiman regarded Gugenhein curiously as he asked, "How?"

"Why, you chumps, I'm going to England the next season and I want to meet the queen myself; and these dukes you know stand in, and in that way I'll be in the swim, and take in the whole business, and the money will come back in one way or another with plenty of interest, besides taking tea with the queen."

"Good scheme; get to see the circus and get a re-

bate besides," said Prettiman and he continued:

"That beats my old classmate, Billy Holdoff's scheme all to pieces. He is edging around with hundred-thousand-dollar presents and making slow progress. His is a coarse graft and everybody is on; the royal circle is ashamed to let him in. But you've got it right, loan a man money which he can't repay and you've got him; loan kings and princes money especially and you've got 'em; the higher they are and the more honor they have, the more you've got 'em; they'll naturally do whatever you tell them to; let you into society, into the bosoms of their family, turn over to you their friends that you may fleece them, in fact, turn over to you whole creeds and governments for the same purpose." Prettiman uttered this last comment slowly and more slowly as the great truths broadened in his mind.

"Now you are beginning to see the point of catching

the duke like a fish on a hook, do you see?" asked Gugenhein.

"I do; your head is level, old man," said Prettiman.

"Don't take so much unction to yourselves," said the Deacon.

"Isn't it true, as a financial principle?" asked Gugenhein.

"Yes, guess so," replied the Deacon, "but you haven't discovered it. It is merely a la Rothschilds. By that hook of loaned money they hold not only the crowned heads, princes and aristocracy of Europe, but the banking and monetary interests of the commercial world, and thereby determine questions of peace and war and the destiny of nations."

"I guess the Deacon's right," said Gugenhein.

"Well, any way we've got the small fry of the United States about in our grip for a while, and we're getting

'em tighter every day," snickered Prettiman.

Just then the Duke of Convort, who had become disengaged and alone, happened in the neighborhood. Mr. Gugenhein swooped upon him. "Ah, dear me, Mr. Duke, glad to see you, Mr. Duke. My friends, Mr. Prettiman and Mr. Lace, commonly called the Deacon, both men of large affairs, sir."

All were glad, very glad, to see the duke. "We're glad to see the noble classes coming over to this country, because it is good for us; oh, how sweet royalty

must be," prayerfully said the Deacon.

And they all huddled up around the duke, as they had closed upon Mr. Ward McIlroy when they first met him, and elbowed him and rubbed against him until they felt quite familiar with him. Though the duke was small and sometimes almost invisible, he seemed to like the familiarity. "I'm so glad to meet you, ah, gentlemen, I've heard of you all before, ah, as great American financiers. Ah, I'm so pleased to see you, and you must come sometime, ah, and dine with me at my rooms, ah,

at the Waldorf, ah, won't you?" smiling sweetly and

out of breath from the rubbing.

"Of course we will, Mr. Duke, and put you in a corner, if you say so," said Prettiman, snickering profusely over himself and the duke.

"Oh how charming," said the duke. "But why put me in a corner when, ah, I'm in a corner already,

ah?"

"How so, Mr. Duke?" asked the Deacon.

"Because," said the duke, "the little five thousand, ah, I drew at your bank yesterday, I dropped, ah, at a little game, ah, called, ah, faro, ah."

"That's nothing, Mr. Duke, come around in the morning and get five thousand more, or ten thousand

if you like it?" said Gugenhein.

"Oh, how charming ah, I thought so. I knew, ah, that you large American bankers would be generous with me, ah. You dear, ah, noble, ah, American bank-

ers," and he smiled like royalty upon them.

"Oh, don't say noble, Mr. Duke," said the Deacon, now quite warmed by the duke's enthusiasm, "you only are noble." And the three of them all huddled up to the little, eye-sore, asthmatic duke and rubbed around and upon him and mixed with him as before. Out of this mill Mr. Ward McIlroy opportunely extricated the duke with main force. The duke came out smiling and gasping.

"Are you alive, My Lord?" asked Ward McIlroy. "Yes, ah, yes," said the duke, at intervals of breath-

"Thunder! did you hear that? Isn't that lovely? Isn't that smooth? Why didn't we call him 'My Lord?'" said Gugenhein, catching on to Ward's address, with a regret participated in by his associates. Each was anxious to roll the word over and over-" Milord."

"Ah, Milord, Milord, did you say you were sick,"

said Gugenhein, rolling over in his mouth the word 'Milord' as if it was a sweet morsel.

"No, ah," said the duke.

"No, Milord, Milord you said you were well, Milord," said Prettiman, dwelling each time on the word 'Milord."

"Yes, ah-a little done up."

"Yes, Milord, Milord, you say, Milord, you Milord, are neither sick nor well, my noble Duke, Milord," said the Deacon, feeling that he had proudly outclassed his associates in polite usage.

"You gentlemen will kindly excuse Milord for a few minutes and I will bring him back to you after a while," said Mr. McIlroy, smiling on his corner-

stones.

"Certainly, Mr. Ward McIlroy," said the others.

"Yes, Milord," said the Deacon to Mr. Ward Mc-Ilroy, involuntarily, and from acquired habit, and because he liked the sound.

And Mr. Ward McIlroy and Milord passed to another part of the great ball room.

"Isn't nobility fine?" said Gugenhein.

"Yes, and I guess easily worked; they are so nice, so lovely, they get their money easy and it goes easy," snickered Prettiman.

"Seven come eleven every time," said the Deacon,

as he popped his knuckles loudly with glee.

"If we only had nobility in this country; if the president, like the queen, could only issue patents of nobility?" said Gugenhein.

"We'd be dukes ourselves," snickered Prettiman.
"Even like Absalom," said the Deacon, solemnly.

In another part of the ball room the duke had returned to the side of Violanita Vanderwenter. If her eyes had not been blinded by the glare of nobility she would have seen that the great duke of great title was a very ordinary person; in fact, an inferior person. His

face was weak, his complexion unhealthy and his small frame decidedly the worse for wear. One of his legs had been so badly shattered by the falling of a horse in some ill-ridden chase, that he had, when he ambled about, a gait suggestive of the movements of a crawfish. His best eye was the one generally covered with a little glass which concealed its want of firmness and purpose. His title was all that remained of a patrimony that had been sedulously squandered by quite a line of weak-minded ancestors.

Violanita Vanderwenter was not a beauty, but she was Willy's sister and immensely rich. Her cousin, the Duchess of Dundy, had brought the Duke of Dundy a dot of twenty millions, and nearly as much was to be had by the desirable title who should acquire this eligible American heiress.

As the titled but impoverished duke gazed on the American heiress, his mouth watered even as the American parvenus a moment before had done, in and about

himself and rolled his title upon their tongues.

Nobility now prostrated itself before wealth—the duke before the ducats. He did not see beneath the powder that the skin of his charmer was mucky, and colored with the soil that slipped in from the horny hands of a recent generation, that her feet were flat and angular, and her figure figureless. She held herself up nicely and pertly for a few minutes at a time, as taught at a boarding school particularly for the instruction of manners, that could not be acquired at home. There was no harm in the girl, she scarcely had intelligence enough to have a will, and what little she had was readily subrogated to the wishes of her mother.

"Ah Miss Violanita, ah, if I may call you so, such a lovely name," said the duke.

"Do you think so Milord?" said Violanita.

"Ah very. So ah aristocratic," replied the duke.

Violanita straightened up as she said, "indeed Mi-

lord," smiling.

"What a proud air ah you have at times ah," said the duke, as he saw his commonplace flattery was proving available.

"Ah Milord, you flatter me," smiling sillily.
"Ah, but ah I don't flatter, I mean it, ah," said the

duke, becoming quite serious in his manner.

"Isn't that a pretty flower that Mr. Delnot has in his button hole?" asked Violanita, as Delnot passed by

with a lady on his arm.

"Oh, ah," said the duke, "perfectly lovely ah, as they say in Boston ah. . But," he continued, "Mr. Delnot's flower ah, is not nearly so beautiful as, as those in England ah."

"England is a nice place, we liked it very much,

mama and I," said the girl.

"Oh ah, I'm so glad you liked it ah," and thinking he saw a new loophole for approach, he added with a voice of tenderness, "ah, how would you like ah, to live ah, in ah, England ah, always ah?"

"Oh my, to live in one place always, summer and

winter, I"-

"Oh ah, no ah, I don't mean that ah, I mean how would ah, you ah, like to live there always?"

"I wouldn't like to live there always," said the girl.

"Oh ah, you don't ah, understand ah."

The duke got no further. At their feet came a crash from which arose the snickering face and awkward frame of Mr. Prettiman. That gentleman had slipped on the polished floor and tumbled into a ridiculous heap.

"Oh ah, are you hurt ah?" asked the duke.

"No Milord, just took a fly Milord."

Mr. McIlrov, ever on the alert hastened to the side of the crushed tragedian. "My dear Mr. Prettiman, are there any bones broken?"

"No Milord, Mr. McIlroy, just a fall of stocks. Take me to our corner." Where, when he and Mr. McIlroy arrived, there seemed to be in the eyes of his associates who less venturesome, had remained safely where they were, a cunning twinkle of satisfied revenge.

The duke returned to Violanita. "What a queer

creature," she said, "and he fell so ungracefully."

"Ungracefully yes ah. You have ah, queer gentlemen ah, in America ah." The duke's emphasis on the word gentlemen was unnoticed.

"Yes, Milord. He is one of my brother's largest

stockholders."

"Oh ah, yes, nice gentleman ah, very rich ah?" said the duke inquiringly.

"Yes, Milord, very rich, a self made man."

"Oh Oh, ah ah, ah me. Yes ah, very rich, ah, self made man ah, gentleman ah. Ah ah." The tone of voice between a shiver and a compulsion in which the duke made this remark, defied analysis.

"Does he ah, Mr. Prettiman ah, ever go abroad ah?"

asked the duke.

"I don't know," replied Violanita. "Ah, hope not."

After a few minutes' silence the duke resumed, "ah when ah, do you visit ah, England ah?"

"I think mama says we will go the coming season."

"Ah delightful."

"We will visit our cousin, the Duchess of Dundy, ma says," said Violanita.

"Charming lady ah, the duchess ah. Right up ah,

you know ah, admitted by the queen ah."
"Oh how charming!" said Violanita.

"Oh ah, how would you ah like that you know?" said the duke, getting excited.

"Oh I'd like to be of that set," said Violanita, think-

ing of the queen.

"Oh you know ah, I mean ah, to be a duchess ah. I mean ah, I'm a duke ah, to be my duchess ah, you

know, to be my wife?" with great excitement in his

effort to make his meaning plain.

Just then Mr. McIlroy came up to them. "Come my Lord, you should be in the grand dining hall with your fair partner. You will find there a supper fit for the gods. Come." And he escorted the pair to the grand hall below.

CHAPTER XIX

AT DUNDY CASTLE

Life is too short to recount all the details of Aphrodite's magnificent procession from the halls of the Vanderwenters to the shores of Albion and the Continent. The Press of this country uttered au revoirs, and that of Europe echoed welcome, in peans of praise to the matchless American beauty. Her passage from beneath the statue of Liberty enlightening the world to the parlors and salons of nobility and royalty, was short and sweet. From before the time of her prototype, the power of beauty, had been as irresistible in the palaces of kings as in the fields and gardens of nature. Beauty like genius, burns its own peculiar way, and has no rules to govern its influence; ordinary gifts must conform to precedent.

On this occasion there had been a charming lawn party in the afternoon at Dundy palace where the Vanderwenters had been right royally received, and were now admired guests. The duchess was delighted with her new cousin, and marked with much satisfaction, the effect Aphrodite had produced upon the many distinguished persons, from time to time invited to the palace, to meet her. A difference of a few thousand miles in longitude, made no difference in the homage that men were ready to yield her amiable graces. And yet neither marriage nor the interjacent ocean could sweep out the existence of certain facts in Aphrodite's

life.

On this occasion as above said there was in progress a lawn party. Most of the participants had gradually withdrawn to various cool and shady places among the magnificent oaks. In one of these shady and retired

places two gentlemen were smoking and talking.

One of them was a little past the middle age and inclined to rotundity of figure, yet graceful and of a pleasant expression, he was often addressed by the other as "Your Highness." The other gentleman was both small and thin.

"So Your Highness thinks she's a greater beauty than Mrs. Langtry?" said the smaller man, who was

no other than the Duke of Penrose.

"Unquestionably," replied his companion. "Her lines are finer. The curves of the shoulders, back and hips are more serpentine and lithe, showing both power and femininity. Her hands and feet are better modeled and the grace of her movements is incomparable."

"You have said nothing about her facial qualities?"

"That's of course secondary at our age, but the artists have determined that question in the preference they have already extended as I am informed, and I think their judgment is right," replied his Highness.

"And last and also least how do they compare intel-

lectually?"

"My dear fellow, there the comparison widens yet more broadly, but we must not make it odious you know."

"Well," resumed the Duke of Penrose, puffing a huge volume of smoke from his lips as he quizzically smiled, "so Your Highness admires her figure, her face and her intellect."

"Yes I do, and I am bound to admit that she has produced an impression on me a little, perhaps too

warm for my present contentment."

His confession was expected by the duke who still more quizzically looked at the prince as he said tantalizingly and with a sinister air of knowing something more, "and should you take her to be a paragon of virtue?"

"Why, what do you mean?" retorted the other.

"Do you think she would prove unassailable to the advances and wishes of your accomplished Highness?"

the first gentleman then said.

"Thanks My Lord, for your doubtful compliments, but I have no means of forming an opinion. But from your peculiar expression just now, I imagined you knew something which might enable me to form an opinion."

"You know that she is an American woman, and entirely unaccustomed to our social methods and therefore verdant as we term it, and not liable to keep the balance of virtue in the excitement of new surround-

ings," said the duke.

"But a woman of strong sense would be unaffected by those considerations, and such I take her to be."

"Don't you think the flattery of court circles and royal distinction are calculated to have effect in the direction of your fancy?" asked his lordship, still maintaining a partially serious and partially comical expression.

"Not with her; there must be something more," said

his highness seriously.

"Well I know more."

"Enough you think?" asked his highness with a look of increased curiosity, "enough you think to overcome the balance of virtue?"

"I should think so," replied the other, now laughing quite loudly at the interest manifested by his highness.

"What would you say," said the duke, "if I should tell you that the famous American beauty, Mrs. Willy Vanderwenter, the representative of American society, the favorite of the Press of both sides of the ccean, the present honored guest of the English nobility, is a high kicker and a cyprian?"

"My —. My Lord! But if you are not joking, truth is stranger than fiction and quite as acceptable," said his highness evidently pleased at the information.

"But how do you know this?" asked the prince.

"On the occasion of my return from Tokio last summer where I had been sent by her majesty's government as you know, I stopped over in New York for a few weeks. I met there some very charming gentlemen to whom I had letters of introduction. They were Perry Delnot, who, though quite young, enjoys reputation as an American statesman, and Mr. Harold Godwin, a most elegant gentleman. Among other charming attentions, they invited me to a kind of private banquet at Newport, a fashionable seaside resort there. At that banquet were present besides the gentlemen named and one or two others, the loveliest and most talented bouquet of young women or rather ladies, I ever encountered. Such singing, dancing and conversation, I never saw so copiously and elegantly mixed with festivity. It was a singular combination and an olla podrida of beauty, genius and gaiety. I admit I was overwhelmed myself and actually fascinated by the chief divinity of the graces there present."

"Well, what has that to do with Mrs. Vanderwen-

ter?" asked his highness.

"She was the chief divinity, the beautiful Aphrodite of that occasion."

"What of that? beauty and grace are not crimes,"

said the prince.

"No, but the high kicking she did, almost a la can

can," said the duke.

The prince looked intently into the green lawn at his feet as he contemplated in imagination the warm spectacle of this beautiful and now celebrated woman kicking high in the air regardless of consequences.

Both parties remained silent for some time, till at

length the prince asked:

"Have you been recognized by her?"

"I can't say," returned the duke. "I have delicately approached her several times in relation to that meeting, but she either does not recall it or pretends not to remember."

"After all you may be mistaken," said the prince.

"I cannot be. I only met her on that occasion, but that occasion was memorable and I am not mistaken; this is the beautiful Aphrodite of that evening," re-

plied the duke.

In another part of the same lawn in a similar shady grotto of oak and vines, Aphrodite was seated enjoying a few moments' quiet conversation with her cousin, the Duchess of Dundy. If Aphrodite had been absent one might have pronounced the duchess lovely enough with her dark brown eyes and rich olive complexion, notwithstanding the duchess's seniority of several years. But the radiance of the rose diminished the dark beauty of the olive.

"The prince seems to be immensely taken with you," said the duchess. "I have noticed him watching you

with an interest he apparently could not conceal."

"I hope not. He is old enough to be sensible, and to know that a married woman should not be the recipient of marked attention of that degree even from a

prince."

"Oh my, what queer notions you have," replied the duchess. "Why any woman, married or single, considers herself honored by the attentions of the prince, and the more marked the attention the greater is considered the honor."

"I shouldn't think any self-respecting woman, American or English, would hold such sentiments,"

said Aphrodite.

"Why my child, I perceive your education has been sadly neglected. I thought Aunt Vanderwenter would have advised you better. And then think of the immense social advantages to be derived from the favor of the prince. In this country the prince is a social power. If it was not for his influence, my husband with all his lands and titles would not have obtained recognition for us at court. The rules of admission

there are very strict and intended to be founded on morality and personal character, as well as title.

"Suppose," said Aphrodite, "the prince should extend to you a personal attention that would ordinarily

be deemed compromising, what would you do?"

"I would and so would my husband, consider it the honor and opportunity of my life," said the duchess with enthusiasm.

Aphrodite closed her eyes with an unnoticed shudder, and after a pause said, "Then where is your feeling

of love and affection in this matter?"

"Your education has been sadly neglected, my dear cousin. Love and affection! that is the idle dream of the child and the peasant. In high life there is no room for such trifles, except as trifles. The serious consideration is social advancement founded upon an accurate calculation of advantages arising from this or that relationship or influence. Such relationships and all marriages are the result of calculation. If you want love and affection you must find it with poodles or a chevalier."

"That is not the rule in America is it?" asked Aphrodite, interested to see how far the duchess would

go in the expression of these sentiments.

"The difference between England and America in these social matters is only a difference of name and degree. In America the possession of large means immediately makes one eligible to become a member of the higher classes, and therefore money is the sole desideratum in all calculations there. But here is to be found an additional social development—a titled nobility; and yet higher is to be found that portion of the titled nobility admitted to association with royalty itself and permitted to breathe the divine atmosphere of the throne. To attain to this last what would not a sane person do?"

"I believe I would prefer the atmosphere of a delicious pine grove in spring time," laughed Aphrodite. "You astonish me," said the duchess. "To think that my dear calculating aunt who as you are aware secured for the hand of Violanita the famous title of the Duke of Convort—to think I say, that she failed to give you an insight into these elementary principles of high life, is I must say most astonishing. Why with your extraordinary beauty and the tendency the prince has already evinced toward you, there is nothing you may not accomplish if properly managed. Come, we must not be so long from our guests." And the ladies returned through the beautiful park.

The ladies had not proceeded far on their return when they were met by his highness, who with a very low and winning bow said, "Pardon me, but you ladies show excellent taste in seeking the quietude of the shady park at this time, rather than the more animated scenes of the general gathering elsewhere.

Will you permit me to enjoy your company?"

"Certainly Your Highness, we were just partaking of the poetry and solitude of you shady bower," said the duchess, pointing to the grotto which they had just

left.

"Let us return there, will you?" continued the prince. "I am sure the sylvan retreats of Dundy park are not haunted except by spirits of pleasant enchantment."

The duchess with approving remarks readily turned the steps of the party in the direction of the grotto they had just quitted, where she was the first to resume her seat and by example thereby induced Aphrodite to do likewise.

"This is indeed a charming place of retirement from the activity of tennis or the annoyance of uninteresting

associations," said the prince.

"In such a spot as this," said the duchess, "Shakespeare might have composed his Midsummer Night's Dream, and I shall leave you two here to see the elfs, the spirits or the gnomes of the poet's fancy, while I, pardon me Your Highness, will elsewhere look after the happiness of perhaps less favored guests." And laughing lightly she arose, and in an instant was tripping out of sight along the green sward.

"Your cousin's fancy about this place is quite poetic,"

said his highness.

"Yes," replied Aphrodite, "My cousin's gifts are

both charming and varied."

"She alluded to the Midsummer Night's Dream. Ah if I could but have and enjoy a perfect midsummer day's dream," said the prince. "A day dream that could bring an absolute forgetfulness of life as it is with its petty realities and annoyances, and steep the senses in perfect repose—pardon my speaking with so much familiarity, but I think we have been, since we first met, sufficiently in each other's company to justify

my trenching a little on your confidence."

Aphrodite catching the sudden solemn humor of the prince, and wishing to indulge it, said gravely, "There is, Your Highness, in the Grecian Archipelago a small island, so surrounded by others that the waves of the angry sea beyond, never reach its peaceful shores. Remote from the highways of ordinary travel, the cares and anxieties of worldly life are never imported within its confines. Its few inhabitants gratefully cultivate the generous soil and worship in the temple of the Goddess of Repose. If Your Highness will go there you may find what you say you seek."

"Will you go with me?" said the prince, looking

directly in the eyes of Aphrodite.

"No," she replied, not choosing to understand, "our present trip does not include at this time, that particu-

lar region of exploration."

"Then why recommend to me a vicinity, that will not be enchanted by your own presence; why exile me to the island of repose when the goddess of repose abjures her sovereignty?"

"The spirits that bring the greatest repose to human

experience are not human," said Aphrodite with a mischievous smile. "They are of a nature so ethereal as to afford what is sometimes called spiritual consolation."

"I perceive," said the prince, "you are making fun

of my serious protestations of devotion."

"Your Highness would not accuse me of so much levity." Aphrodite said this in a lively, good natured manner, and her smiles were so radiant that the prince

became more and more enraptured.

"But your levity is unendurable," said the prince smiling but complaining. "While I weep you smile. While my heart is breaking with an uncontrollable emotion of unexpressed tenderness"—and the prince's manner became serious—"and I would like to dream even for a moment only of the possibility of its return—even for a moment only. You smile so radiantly and your heart beats so calmly, that like the vessel departing in the moonlight,

"'You seem to bear all peace within, Nor leave one breaking heart behind."

But pardon me for quoting poetry. I forswore that habit since the establishment of the present poet laureate."

The gaiety and comic seriousness, the badinage of the prince's utterances added to the fascination of a manner that was deferential and engaging, did not fail to enlist Aphrodite's interest in his compliments. She consented to be entertained by the policy he had pursued so long as it did not become too serious and compromising, for as the reader knows she was no prude; and the prince on his part began to construe her relenting bonhomie as an omen in his favor, and desirous not to injure his chances by pressing his hopes too boldly, considered he had removed the first barriers to their realization, and became proportionately amenable to the dictates of reason, and their further conversa-

tion followed well within the bounds of the proper and usual.

On the same evening at a late hour and after the festivities had ceased, the Duke of Dundy called on his duchess in her private apartments. As he has not hitherto appeared except by reference, a very slight description is necessary to identify him. He was the wreck of what was once a fine specimen of physical manhood. The finest art of the surgeon had been exercised to patch up successfully the facial marks of reckless dissipation; and by those marks on the nose and underlip he was readily identified anywhere. His American wife had reinstated his fortune and for her judgment on questions of finance he had as we shall presently see, the highest respect. As she was fond of titles, he always addressed her as the duchess.

As he entered her apartments and presence he said, "Will the Duchess extricate me from a financial situa-

tion that is pressing?"

"What is the situation, My Lord?" she replied

pleasantly.

"Well you see, the prince wants to borrow twenty thousand pounds from me, and if he gets it, you know it will cut me down in the improvements I was making on the west wing of the old castle."

"What does the prince want with it?"

"He wants half of it to replace what he lost at roulette last night, and I think the other half is to accompany an order he has made on his jeweler for a solitaire diamond; from what he said I infer that to

be his object."

"A diamond," said the duchess contemplatively. Then she continued, "It must be for Aphrodite," and she smiled. Turning toward the duke again she said, "I think the situation can be met. You go to Mr. Gugenhein, the banker, who has been with us here for the last three days, and tell him that I say to go to the prince and offer him the money. The prince will ac-

cept it for you know, he is not very particular in such cases. Besides I have an idea from certain conferences that I have noticed going on, that Gugenhein has acquired an interest already in the roulette game and has therefore won ten thousand of the prince's money, and as for the other ten thousand, tell him that the prince and ourselves will subscribe to the railroad scheme he talked about the first night he arrived here."

"Oh grand! Grand! my Duchess."

"But," continued the duchess, "we must see that this enterprising financier shall share with us some of the enormous profits he shall make through our advice and introduction."

"We certainly should get some of the benefits," assented the duke, "for the American banker is such a wonderful bore you know; so awkward, always in the

way, making horrid mistakes, you know."

"But you will find him always with his eyes and ears open for opportunities for business. Explain the matter to him to-morrow as I have suggested, and our exchequer will not only be spared but augmented."

"Good-night my lovely Duchess, you have relieved my anxiety. Good-night," and the duke returned to

his own apartments in another part of the palace.

After the duke had withdrawn as also the maids in waiting, and the lights had been extinguished or lowered to dimness, an uncertain youthful shadow that might have been real or might have been a baseless imagination, flitted across the heavenly apartments of

the gifted duchess.

The next day Mr. Gugenhein (who, for purposes of inspection, had crossed "the pond" in a cattle ship, in which enterprise he was a large stockholder,) was vastly pleased to invest in loans to the noble prince, and at the same time received an invitation to the queen's reception and secured the prince's subscription to the railroad scheme. By a shrewd combination he had not been on the premises twenty-four hours before he had

secured a principal interest in the banking games and devices that were fleecing the foolish nobles who insisted in squandering their fortunes, and he was foremost at the games as a capper or stool pigeon to lead the others to their ruin and his own tremendous profit. "Chumps, chumps," he soliloquized, "I don't know which is the greater chump, the American consumer or the British noble."

CHAPTER XX

THE QUEEN'S RECEPTION

THE queen's reception was grand and particularly grand on that particular day. All the world of the great of all nations were there and so were Aphrodite and Mr. Gugenhein. By these two as well as the Duchess of Dundy and the American legation, America was represented.

Representatives of all the nations of the globe were

there in brilliant colors.

That charming old lady of exemplary distinction in every dutiful relation of life as a woman, and for that reason deserving and receiving the general respect of people all over the world, presided with much dignity. And the prince was there, the natural guardian of the home circle, charged with the duty of seeing that none but the pure approached the sacred person of majesty and much venerated old age. Notwithstanding his private information, the prince deviated from established forms to be personally near when Aphrodite was brought into the glorious presence of royalty.

When Aphrodite had arrived the same pleasant flutter of surprise and admiration that usually accompanied her appearance, rippled through the distin-

guished audience.

The gentle influence of fragrant beauty that had permeated the beholders on her first appearance in the great chamber, had reached also her majesty, who from time to time had turned her eyes on the fair vision of beauty as if to drink in some of the reflected youth and vitality of her being, and when Aphrodite came to be personally presented, so modest and charming was her

demeanor, and so fresh and child like were the colors that radiated over her beautiful face, that the dear old lady could not and did not resist the temptation to unbend from the formal and to impress upon her chameleon cheek a warm and graceful kiss.

So natural was the act, that its unusualness only became a matter of comment and approbation long

after it was done.

It can be imagined what was the Duchess of Dundy's sense of social triumph at this extraordinary manifestation of royal regard accorded her American cousin; and to what colossal heights her ambition began to soar, founded on this and the prince's evident subjugation to the thralldom of Aphrodite's beauty, it is difficult to imagine. Constellations of titled persons from every land began to gather round the duchess and the new particular favorite, and sought to borrow as satellites the light directly bestowed upon Aphrodite with such extraordinary distinction.

A little later with bounding heart the duchess approved the duke's acceptance of an invitation to remain with his party at the royal palace. This gracious in-

vitation was borne by the prince in person.

It was under these brilliant circumstances and on the evening of the same eventful day, that in one of the many beautiful and retired alcoves of the palace drawing room that the prince, unable longer to restrain his emotions, pressed his suit upon Aphrodite.

For the time being they were as absolutely alone and free from interruption as if situated at some distant and

uninhabited locality.

"You have attained to an honor enjoyed by very few outside the royal family, in the personal regard shown to you so singularly to-day. And I wish as a further assurance of our regard—I desire to request you as a favor to me, to accept this slight token of my "—here he hesitated, producing a magnificent solitaire diamond ring, he proceeded—" of my consideration, I wish I

might be allowed to say of my affection—yes I will say affection, for I can remain silent no longer." His manner became animated, his eyes turned and a bright flush lit up his cheeks.

Aphrodite moved as if to arise from the ottoman on

which they were sitting.

"No," he continued passionately, restraining her so that she could not have arisen except by considerable effort, "no, you will not disregard my devotion."

"Your Highness takes me by surprise," said Aphro-

dite.

"What surprise?" said the prince. "Do you mean to say that you are now surprised, when for every moment of my existence, from the time when I first beheld you, your image has received my daily worship, and your success and enjoyment here have received my studied efforts and constant care."

"For these last I am grateful and thank you much,"

she replied.

"Take then this memento, this little ring as a token of my devotion and affection."

"I cannot," said Aphrodite.

"Oh yes you can, and hearken, -as long as you will keep it for my sake, I lay at your feet to command, all the vast powers that custom and empire have deposited within my influence. Be careful and consider well that influence, which will be vastly greater in the not distant future. Know that it is now the dream of the statesmen of Europe to mould together the royal thrones and families by marriage and alliance, to enrich the nobility and to ennoble the rich, to direct by international understandings the channels of currency, trade and commerce, so that its beneficent fruits shall be deluged in superabundance on the favored few, to maintain vast standing armies ostensibly because of national jealousy, but really to perpetuate the international scheme of general authority, to involve the nations in debts secured by bonds held by the favored classes, and to secure more bonds by international guarantees, in other words to concentrate and secure the wealth of the world by governmental action in the hands of the favored classes—and in this gigantic combination it falls to me to exercise a powerful and controlling influence, and all this I lay at your feet to control, modify or extend as you may desire when occasion demands. It includes frequently the power of life and death, to bind and to loose, and whole nations and populations, their prosperity, their lives, their liberties depend upon the machination of a cabal, of which I am a principal factor."

"You charm me with such an exposition of tremendous power," said Aphrodite, whose intellectual faculties were aroused at the pendency of such gigantic events. The prince seeing the deep interest manifested by her rapt attention, proceeded now more

calmly to interest her spacious intellect.

"In your country the genius of Jefferson created the idea of a government by the many. In Europe the genius of modern Machiavelianism-by controlling through unseen hands their means of livelihood, their very existence from day to day, controls the many and compels them to be as subservient to the will of the dominant classes as they were a thousand years ago. In your country the secret trust is the unseen hand that controls the livelihood of the many, and it is only a short time distant when you will have there a rich aristocracy controlling the lower and laboring classes, and in entire accord and alliance with the aristocracies of Europe. Then will the entire world be dominated by the rich and superior classes having their alliances and maintaining their standing armies to suppress occasional rebellion."

Now truly was all the power and glory of the world exhibited to Aphrodite's fascinated gaze, to be swayed and controlled at her instance and request. Her broad intelligence and wide experience assured her of the truth of some existing and unseen octopus that was powerfully affecting the livelihood and existence of the great masses of the people. And to be able to direct the actions of this monster, to cause it to throttle the supplies and bring famine upon this population, or to bring plenty and prosperity upon that, seemed a power so extraordinary, so universal, and so dangerous, that she seemed for a time appalled at the contemplation.

Seeing her deep interest, the prince continued:

"It is no longer now a question of nations. Among the higher statesmen of to-day, the boundary lines of the nations of Europe, of England, of Germany, of Italy, of France, are obliterated. It is not a question of the supremacy of this or that nation, but of the supremacy of the ruling classes all over the world. And they are banded together everywhere, and perceive in the established reigning families the safest and most powerful means of putting into execution the great plan of the universal subjection of the inferior to the superior classes. In ancient times empires were conquered by force; in modern times vaster conquests are silently effected by a secret cabal of bankers and merchants; in ancient times the dead lay on the field of battle; in modern times whole populations writhe and groan and die by a well directed famine; in ancient times the enemies grappled with each other in coarse affray; now, at an elegant supper of the choicest viands and among the scent of roses and beneath the banner of Christianity, we genteelly issue a regulation of commerce or of currency, that blasts human life like contagion and destroys the poor and unprepared like miserable and unknowing insects, until they yield to the exactions of their superiors."

"In truth, what a development of modern states-

manship," said Aphrodite.

The prince continued: "Machiavelli himself, though his unseen methods, imperceptible to the people, have been adopted, never dreamed of such gigantic and absolute conquests, as the kid-gloved cabal of to-day executes under the peaceful guise of currency or commercial necessity, and the terrible consequences are generally so remote from the intending cause, that the acutest intellect not in the actual secret and observing its certain results, is unable distinctly to point out the connection, and is confounded by the knowing ones under the charge of theorists, dreamers and agitators."

"How wonderful," retorted Aphrodite, "but where

is your humanity in this scheme of conquest?"

"Humanity," said the prince, "and Conquest seldom form a couple. There is a vast amount of humanity among the ruling classes of Europe, more so than in your country, because they are, I may say, to the manor born, but that spirit of humanity is not permitted to influence the few who wield the power. You see it is a battle not selected by, but forced upon, the higher classes by the growing anarchy of republicanism of this century. If the latter is permitted to prevail, the result will be the destruction of the higher classes, the disintegration of wealth and a redistribution upon socialistic principles of the equality of man. In defense and armed as we are by the advantage of existing institutions, the higher classes have organized the tremendous forces of Art, Science and Commerce, and by the talisman Wealth are obliged for their own safety to reduce to dependence, poverty and submission those classes whose just mission is to labor and to perform in loval obedience the behests of their superiors. You see it is a battle royal. On one side royalty, nobility, aristocracy, established government, wealth, art, science, commerce, and all capital, against the miserable laboring people, sans-culottes, without sense, without discrimination, without gratitude, or anything else worth having or respecting. To which side would you ally yourself?" asked the prince.

"To which side belongs humanity?" asked Aphrodite.

"You ask a difficult question," said the prince. "So do you," replied Aphrodite.

"All these things will I lay at your feet," resumed

the prince.

Aphrodite had fallen into a profound and contemplative mood. Her eyes were closed as the panorama of the present and of the future passed before her mind. She beheld before her one of the giants that controlled the vast destinies of nations, and with a woman's admiration she was fascinated by his strength and power. The prince closely watching the resignation of her expression took in his the motionless hand at her side, and as gently placed the splendid ring upon her finger.

Just then the prince happened to look toward the door of the salon; he saw there the approving visage of

Mr. Gugenhein, the American banker.

Gugenhein immediately disappeared and as he strode away with a cunning smile, he said aloud: "She's caught a royal flush—good for all the assets in my bank." A moment after the prince closed the door, and returned to the side of the still contemplative Aphrodite.

The prince again gently took her hand, without resistance. His hopes were rising mightily, as he gazed on the placid beauty at his side and inwardly pronounced her supernal perfection worthy the grandest

effort of royalty."

"Tell me," she said incoherently, and without moving, "tell me, the famine in India, where wages are one and two cents per day-where in the pangs of starvation the demented mother tears the insufficient morsels of food from her starving children, where the emaciated skeletons, without food and without hope are gathered together by the government in pens-and where organized charity doles out enough to prolong their misery but not enough to save—tell me, is this one of your devastating and terrible coups?" Her eyes remained closed as before as if to shut out the

terrible images that occurred to her mind.

"Why assuredly," resumed the prince. "The famine in India, and I may add the unprecedented suffering in your country, were simultaneous and spring from the same deliberate cause. In India the object was the subjection of the laborer only and the facilitation of commerce between India and England upon terms of still greater advantage to this country, by the extinction of silver currency. But the object in relation to your country was more important and far reaching. The object there was not only to reach the laborer but also the farmer who constitutes the yeomanry of your country. It is easy enough to reach the laborer by a mandate to the great trusts and corporations through the confederated banks to withdraw employment, and at once want and starvation seizes upon him and his dependents; but to reach and destroy the farmer yeomanry required finer and more complex diplomacy. That object is sought to be accomplished, by the proposed rapid and tremendous decline of land values in America, the farmers are if possible to be foreclosed, turned out of their possessions and relegated to the ranks of labor where they are more easily handled, and their lands must go into the friendly hands of the rich, loan and trust companies and other corporations, whose interests and associations are identified with capital and with us. To these great ends we some years ago inaugurated the policy which by demonetizing one-half the money metal of the world, vastly augmented the value of the remaining half and in greater proportion lowered the money value of the world, at the same time the banks who are organized and under our control are given the power to issue a currency, which when withdrawn at our command, still further contracts the currency either in a locality or over entire empires. Whereby the supreme holders of money are enabled not only to subject the troublesome classes to their will, but in the language of the bourse, to hold a corner on the money of the world and at will to speculate on the rise or fall of markets, whose rise or fall is the calculated result of their own machinations. So that the cabal of modern diplomacy not only controls the destiny of millions of people by controlling their supplies, but possesses the magic power of transferring the property of the world from one set of holders to another or to themselves as they see fit, in due time and by seemingly natural causes."

"And you say that my country will be affected and

is affected?" asked Aphrodite.

"Yes. This troublesome thing called the spirit of liberty that broke out in France during the last century has spent its force and is pretty well regulated in Europe, and can do no harm here. The power of royalty and the ruling classes in Europe is better established and on surer foundations, than it has been for several centuries. I will ascend the throne with more loyal acclamations and more strongly intrenched with power than any English monarch since Henry VIII. The silly people and philosophers may talk about the king being shorn of his ancient prerogatives, but in modern times the foundations of his power are broader than his own country and are based for their perpetual maintenance on the allied capital of the world. In your country it was different. The spirit of liberty became deeply imbued among the masses of your people. And if your presidents had chosen to interfere with European policy, and to foster the discontent of Europe, there was a time when your statue of Liberty enlightening the world might have had an actual significance. But you lost your opportunity. Your higher or let me say richer classes preferred to ape the titles of the European nobility, rather than to practice the simplicity of the republic, or to spread its seeds broadcast on fields that were ready. We thank you for that, and now we are ready to extend to you through your governing classes the same policies and gradations of rank that we have, to subject the poor and unworthy classes to their proper sphere and obedience, and to admit your rich and ruling classes to a noble equality with the rich and ruling classes of Europe."

"Pardon me for a personal question," said Aphrodite, "but how does it happen that Your Highness is known only as a gentleman of leisure, when I now perceive that you are a great master in the art or science

of diplomacy?"

"Without claiming too much for myself, let me point out another distinction between the history of the past and that of the present. Formerly the conquerors were known by the circumstance and pomp of war, now a few gentlemen in a private salon or a banker's parlor, pass a few resolutions affecting the fate of millions— and generally the authors of these tremendous events prefer to remain in the obscurity and uncertainty that characterize the causes themselves."

"One thing more I would ask you," said Aphrodite, how do you reconcile these deadly influences with the organized charities that are a characteristic feature

of modern rich society?"

"Ah," smiled the prince, "beneath the sweet name of organized charity the most fatal thrust is driven at the independence and self reliance of the poor. First by lack of employment we drive the farmer and the citizen into the ranks of the poor, and then we rob him of his self respect by leaving him to become dependent upon us for his daily bread and feed him like cattle at the soup house of organized charity. When a man reaches that stage there is little room left in his bosom for the spirit of liberty or rebellion, such qualities are more liable to be found in the shame-faced beggar who asks his pittance in the shades of night, or the high-

way robber who forcibly extorts, but in the victims of organized charity—never."

'This is indeed the refinement of cruelty," said

Aphrodite seriously.

How far she had dissembled or how far she was real, in the former parts of this remarkable conversation will never be known. That she was attracted and fascinated by the novel recital and adroit diplomat, we have much reason to believe. But now she turned

coldly toward the prince, as she said:

"Know, oh Prince, that it ill becomes me as the daughter of the people to wear this badge of bondage and infamy," removing the sparkling diamond from her finger and placing it at the prince's side. "Know further that the terrible scheme of devastation and conquest you have recounted is impossible of accomplishment, though sometimes seemingly successful; that good, not evil, is the necessary corner stone of all human achievements. That the Christian motto, 'good will toward all men,' is a stronger and more permanent foundation for existing governments, than the fear, hatred and secret malice that poisons the source of your machinations. Good alone can in the long run conquer in this world, evil flourishes but for a day to be cast thereafter into the oven. Know that the spirit of liberty is good and unconquerable, though sometimes called by its enemies rebellion and anarchism. In America it is intertwined with the woof and warp of our constitution, and cannot be extirpated except with the extinction of the government itself. Know also that besides the American rich who ape the manners of European aristocracy, there is a large and powerful class of rich persons who are satisfied with and proud of the grandeur of the American republic, and who would scorn to re-enact the dependence their forefathers battled to destroy. Know also that the small land owners and farmers of America, many of them the descendants of those who doomed Charles I to the scaffold, are sturdy, liberty loving, frugal, and virtuous, and cannot and will not peaceably be deprived of their holdings and forced into bankruptcy and ruin. Your scheme is an impossibility, and you are building upon a volcano, which it is in the power of American diplomacy to excite into activity and to deluge you and the governments of Europe in ruin and extinction. There exists now in that country an avenging apostle of promise, who made all powerful by the aid of the good and liberty loving, will soon have it in his hands not only to protect the jeopardized welfare of the poor and lowly of America, but like omnipotent Jove shall cast amid the nations of Europe the thunderbolts of anarchy and disruption, out of which may arise in time as after the reign of Terror, the pure, sublime, eternal spirit of Liberty."

As Aphrodite thus delivered herself she had arisen and stood towering over the prince in radiant beauty and power. Her splendid health and physical perfection, her plain sound logic uttered in a calm, clear, commanding yet feminine tone, made her appear a very priestess of liberty. The prince gazed upon her in dis-

may. As he made no answer, she continued:

"Stay your hand, great Prince. Exercise the vast influence you possess in the direction of humanity. Kneel to that God your mother worships, and ask wisdom to see that evil is a curse, and goodness, kindness, a boon; that a government that is not humane cannot endure. Imitate that other Prince who humbled Himself before men, that man might be saved, and whose royal empire founded upon peace, good will to all men, shall only perish when by some terrible cataclysm an entire cosmos shall be plunged headlong downward in eternal space, or the universe darkened in Erebean extinction, and perhaps not even then."

A moment before, the prince hoping to wound his escaping prey, thought to taunt her with her reported incontinence, but the grace, the intellect, the splendor,

the grandeur of the woman drove the small thought away as he stood overwhelmed by the marvelous power of her utterance.

Just then Mr. Gugenhein appeared. He had opened the door and entered the room. The great American banker was capper for a game he had adroitly organized. He needed the prince in his business and innocent of etiquette had come after him. Aphrodite took advantage of this intrusion to withdraw, bowing

kindly to his royal highness.

They met no more. Willy's health which had been bad for some time grew seriously worse, and her time was largely employed in looking after the wants and comforts of the poor sick youth. And within a very few days their further trip on the Continent was abandoned as impracticable at that time, and orders given to get the yacht in readiness for their return voyage to New York.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RETURN VOYAGE

THE ocean sleeps.

That monster that embraces two-thirds of the world, sleeps. On his placid bosom he tolerates in safety the commerce of nations and the lives of human beings. But when aroused and angry he dashes into wreckage the navies of strong steel, and overwhelms and devours the mariner. Oh, how mighty, how beautiful and plastic; how treacherous and how rich he is! Not an atom of spray that flies with the passing breeze but is freighted with gold. He holds within his watery grasp, in plentiful solution, millions of gold, yellow gold, more than Crœsus ever dreamed of. He steals the ethereal color of the clouds and transposes them with new life and motion, to his own majestic bosom. He laughs gleefully and chases with his waves the graceful crafts that speed over his swelling surface. But beware of his change of temper, beware of his wrath, his mighty, terrible, fatal wrath.

In ancient times temples were erected to this deity and the mariner and the merchant, before committing themselves to his changeful care, sought to propitiate him by suitable invocation and sacrifice. In the modern prayer book is still to be found some prosaic recognitions of his might, but the beautiful ceremonies that propitiated the pagan god of the ocean now remain, embalmed in the perfume of the elegant religion of

the classics.

As Aphrodite viewed from her yacht the calm heaving bosom of the great ocean, she breathed aloud the following exquisite stanzas:

"Monster sleep, still sleep, still sleep, Slumber midst your caverns deep While the mermaid sings and curls, Wreathes your hair with gems and pearls.

Heed the harp by Heaven strung, Feel the spell of siren tongue. Happy dream by sleep opprest, Happy dream, in peace caressed.

Monster sleep, nor mark that man Hath stretched below with impious hand, To snatch the pearls that glisten there In many a Nereid's golden hair.

Angry God! no more assuage; See the madness of his rage, Hear him lash the trembling main, See the wreckage, mourn the slain.

Angry God! woe worth the day
That man would snatch your gems away.
Suspicious now, too oft you rise
In monstrous anger to the skies.

But now forget that day and sleep, Slumber midst your caverns deep, While the mermaid sings and curls, Wreathes your hair with gems and pearls."

As the last words of the above were uttered, Aphrodite gazed upon the vast expanse of boundless sea and fell into a musing mood and posture. She thought of the many extraordinary views she had observed in her lofty altitudes of high society, and wondered at the sentiments expressed and the unscrupulous methods practiced by Mrs. Vanderwenter, the Duchess of Dundy and lastly those avowed by his highness. Her sense of right and justice was much shocked, and she found it difficult to reconcile the sentiments expressed by these persons with the exercise of good morals or proper manners. The violence done by herself to her own notions of morals and manners, did not seem

upon fair consideration to be so dangerously contrived against the welfare of the world, as the sentiments, morals and manners cultivated by that more fashionable society she had been brought in contact with through her marriage. She did not try to justify herself, but she could not accept as right and proper what she had observed in others, and discovered at last that her reflections were melancholy and painful. So often is the petted darling of society, the secret prey of contending emotions.

Willy had presently requested her presence and she retired promptly below to his stateroom. There stretched upon a bed of pain and amid a foam of down and white silks, lay the languishing form of her young

husband.

"I have asked you to come," he said gently, "that I might say to you something that I otherwise might

have withheld in order not to alarm you."

She noticed for the first time the increased pallor of his complexion, and sympathetically extended her hand upon his forehead. He smiled and closed his eyes, as if resting peacefully. The charm of her touch dispelled pain. "How long have you been thus seriously ill, Willy?" she said warmly. "Why have I not been notified? I thought you absented yourself under pretense of indisposition, in order to avoid the demands and annoyances of uncongenial society. I had no idea that you were so ill. I should have been properly informed and not kept in the dark. My poor boy!" And again her tender sympathy for the sick frail creature welled from her eyes, thrilled through her gentle fingers and brought to his brow relief—repose.

With a smile he said, "I should not talk much; my physician who has just retired so commands me, but it is my duty to say to you that I may not live even

through this short voyage."

"Oh you shall, you shall; yield not to such fancies," said Aphrodite impulsively.

"No," he replied, "my prostration has rapidly increased; I know it and I saw just now a deep dark cloud hovering over you and also over me, and when your hand touched my forehead, it faded away."

"I shall keep the cloud away," she said, trying to

"I shall keep the cloud away," she said, trying to smile. "I would scold you for keeping me so long in ignorance, but from now I shall be your constant

nurse."

"Tell mother," he said, "we went to the Duchess of Dundy's." He smiled and fell asleep; and she mused that again the heartless demands of society exacted

perhaps another victim.

As Willy slept she summoned the physician who confirmed Willy's words and her own sudden alarm. The only explanation she could obtain for the strange concealment of his condition, was Willy's strict injunction that the pleasure of her visit should not be marred by intelligence of his illness and that the wishes of his mother might be observed in all things.

The iron will of the society mother became a feature in the mortal illness of her son. When his eyes opened and he beheld Aphrodite a gentle smile rested on his lips, and though the skill of the physician could not stay the steady sinking of vitality, still the gentle influence and sympathy of beauty won repose for the

soothed senses of the sufferer.

Deeply interested now in the noble, womanly duty of alleviating sickness and suffering Aphrodite remained

night and day at the bedside of her husband.

A few days later she received a report from the captain that the storm which had for some time been pending and driving the vessel out of her course, had grown worse and more threatening.

"Ah," said Aphrodite to herself, "the Ocean God

is angry again at the impiety of man."

The condition of the sick was not benefited by the increased violence of the gale. The lash of the waves, the shrieking of the cordage, the tramping of the sailors, were unusual sounds that penetrated the rich upholsteries of the stateroom. The vessel rose and fell and rolled with the mountainous waves without, and her splendid strength was taxed to the utmost to duly minister to Willy's safety and comfort.

Startled at some unusual sound, he would spring into wakefulness with eyes wild-staring with life's fit-ful fever, and then he would close them again gently and with a trustful smile, at Aphrodite's touch and

voice so sweetly reassuring.

Death and wealth had met in unequal combat. The grim visage sat unseen at the bedside. The grip he held on the heart, the lungs and the brain of his victim became firmer, except when at the touch of gentleness, youth and beauty, the poor youth felt the warmth of recurring life, only to be replaced by the persistent grasp of the cold, icy hand extending out of the unseen.

Death laughs at the wealthy, for with droll humor he knows how few would return from the unknown bourne seasonably but to find their possessions distributed among their sorrowing relatives and friends, and if they did return what would they do, bereft of their wealth?

On the next day the captain reported that the violence of the storm had increased, that the steering apparatus was becoming unmanageable and the danger

to the vessel became greater.

On the evening of the same day, the captain reported that the steering apparatus was broken and useless and the vessel now abandoned to the fury of the waves; that the crew including himself and physician would embark in the remaining life boats and exhorted her to accompany them if she would save her life.

"Take him then first," she said, pointing to the mo-

tionless figure.

"Madame," the captain replied, "we can assume no useless burthens, it is now a last question of life or death for us. Will you go?"

"I will not unless he goes before me," she answered. "It is impossible madame, farewell. May God pro-

tect you-and us." The captain departed.

In a short time thereafter all hands abandoned the doomed vessel, and alone with her charge was left the beautiful Aphrodite, accompanied by the Grim Visage that still remained patiently waiting for his victim, and surrounded by the surging and angry waves.

In so short a time the beautiful star of the social diadem, flattered and courted by Press and princes, became a deserted waif on the angry bosom of the relentless ocean. Who so poor, so beggarly, so desperate

that would take her place now?

And yet deserted as she was, surrounded by death and danger, without a murmur, without complaint, this undaunted woman turned steadfastly to her kindly duties to the dying.

CHAPTER XXII

RESTORED TO THE SEA

John the faithful had returned to New York and accomplished by the help of Delnot, and Warren, the difficult missions intrusted to his care. Among the most difficult were the negotiations with Mr. Prettiman for the repurchase of Hillstone. That worthy gentleman, notwithstanding the general decline of values, insisted upon and received the celebrated one per cent. return for his investment. The negotiations were at an end and John had called at his office to pay the money and receive the deed.

"How does your master make all that money?" said Prettiman, his nose dilating, his eyes sparkling and his lips snickering as he gloated over the pile

of packages of purchase money.

"My master don't make money, he spends it," re-

plied John coldly.

"Gad, what a man!" exclaimed Prettiman, wondering. "He has been spending money like a prince all his life; and now when the knowing ones thought he was bankrupt, he sends back and repurchases Hillstone for twice what it sold for and more than it's worth."

"Mr. Harold is not concerned about the worth of Hillstone. He was born there, and also his ancestors

before him for many generations."

Said Prettiman, "I thought so; there was something about the house oppressive, like a weight of dignity, that I couldn't stand. I wish him joy of his bargain, and I am satisfied." Saying this, he handed to John the

deeds, which had been lying on the table, duly executed and approved.

"One thing I would like to know," said John hesitatingly as if he took some serious risk in the answer.

"What is it?" said Prettiman.

"Did you, during your ownership ever stop at or sojourn in the premises?" this was asked slowly and

seriously.

"I just told you," replied Prettiman, "that I couldn't endure the cold stateliness or something of the place. It gave me the horrors. I never went there but once, and a few minutes sufficed, for I returned on the first train to New York."

"Thank God," replied John relieved. "I think Mr.

Harold will give you another hundred thousand."

"What's that for?" inquired Prettiman curiously.

"Nothing. Everything. You wouldn't understand. The chances are he will," said John, now smiling, entirely satisfied with the repurchase, and taking his leave.

"Funny man," said Prettiman, "talks in riddles."

The Deacon who had silently sat and listened to the dialogue between Prettiman and John, now remarked: "So you don't understand the last allusion Prettiman?"

"Can't say that I do," replied Prettiman.

"He meant that it was worth another hundred thousand dollars to his master to know that you had not inhabited his house and desecrated his premises, with your personal occupancy, as he regards it," said the Deacon.

"Well, what of that?" asked Prettiman, still at a

loss.

"How would you like to have a cold clammy snake crawl up your pants' leg, envelope your body, and exude its sickening odors between your nose and lips?"

"God you make my flesh crawl," said Prettiman. "Well that's the way he means his master and his

kind feels toward you and your kind," said the Deacon.

"He pays me well for it," said Prettiman, "so I'm satisfied. He pays for having sentiments and I am paid for having none. Business men have no business with sentiments," and he snickered and went away with his bank notes.

On the same evening at a late hour the flower girl we have met before was accosted by a figure that came suddenly out of the darkness of the corner near by. He was elegantly dressed in black, and long dark twisted curls fell on his forehead and partially concealed his features. It might be a wig. "Do you know me?" he asked.

The girl looked intently and answered, "No, I don't." She noticed the blanched paleness of his cheeks.

"I owe you some money, do you remember?" he said.

"I do not remember," replied the girl.

"Look at me close and see if you know me."

Again the girl failed to identify him. The speaker

seemed pleased.

"I wish to pay back my debt. Here's dollars for cents," and without counting, before the astonished girl could refuse or remonstrate, he handed her a pack-

age and disappeared.

The following morning's papers gave an account of the sudden death of the multi-millionaire Prettiman. It was uncertain from the character of the wound and the position of the body, whether he was the victim of suicide or murder. A small red rose was found near the body.

Also on the same morning John had called at Mr. Delnot's to report his doings. Warren was also there.

"Now that you have everything done that Mr. Godwin required, I suppose you are ready soon to return to his island," said Delnot.

"If you are ready sir," replied John, "we will start to-morrow."

"I am ready and Mr. Warren will go also; so you may be here at the hour and we will start together. Is there anything you would wish for Mr. Godwin or yourself, before going?" asked Delnot kindly.

"Nothing Mr. Delnot that I think of, thanks. Good

night sir," and John departed.

On the following morning the faithful friends and the faithful servant departed on their pilgrimage of devotion. Delnot and Warren had concluded to visit Harold in his retreat, for a few days before they should return together to Hillstone, and to the great metropolis.

The journey to the island was pleasant but without important incident, and we pass over the joy of the friends on the first evening of their meeting after so long an absence. The topics of conversation were many and interesting, but principal of all was Aphrodite's marriage, the procession of glory from this country to England, and her unequalled triumphs in the latter, all of which had been duly reported for the benefit of society, also was mentioned the great railroad scheme placed in Europe by Gugenhein, banker, and at a late hour they retired to their respective apartments. On the next morning the waking members of the household became aware of the prevalence of a tremendous storm.

As they gazed from their windows they beheld the raging ocean lashed into fury with numberless whitecaps and vast spreading mountain waves. At the outer reefs these waves met and whirled into mad lofty geysers of spray and white foam. The angry roar resounded upon the beach, and the strong wind beat violently at the sides and cornices of the snug built cottage. All the evidences were present of a vast and general tempest.

As Harold contemplated the grand scene, he seemed

to imbibe its tumultuous spirit. Caught with the infection of the unloosed spirits of the storm, he left the house and went with the wind to the remotest corners of the beach. Happily he lifted his brow and received upon it the spray kisses of the angry ocean, with smiling eyes he watched the vast waves rolling and breaking in sprinkled gems at his feet, and his delighted ear caught the deep resounding music of the wild thunder of the coast.

"I have had a charming walk this morning," he said to his friends that afternoon.

"You must enjoy the storm," said Delnot, "it seems to exhilarate you."

"I presume it is because one gets tired of sunshine

on this enchanted island," said Delnot.

For one, two, three days the storm continued with unabated fury, when on the fourth Harold discerned a vessel on the horizon. The fury of the winds and waves was driving her in the direction of the island. At first she appeared like a little black dot now rising upon a mountain wave, now sinking out of sight, but gradually as she came nearer the outlines of the vessel became apparent. The vessel was evidently derelict—abandoned to the mercy of the waves, for no smoke issued from her battered funnels, and she drifted aimlessly, a thing without intelligence or control.

Delnot and Warren had by this time joined Harold on the beach. "A derelict ship is like a derelict man, aimlessly drifting before the storms of life," said Del-

not.

"Humanity has more tolerance for the ship than for

the man," said Warren.

"It's a difference of seeing," replied Delnot. "If we were free from moral obliquity ourselves, and were capable of viewing in its full proportions the grand ruin of a human soul, abandoned to the winds and waves of adversity, most men would rush to the rescue. But we are blinded by our own obliquity and pass

unnoticed the grand moral derelict while we follow with eager interest and expectancy the derelict vessel.

Our senses control our morals."

"After all I don't believe this vessel is entirely derelict. I think I saw just now a white object in motion," said Harold, who had intently watched the approaching vessel.

"Where?" asked Delnot.

"There on the after deck," said Harold. "Don't you see it?"

In vain his friends peered across the watery deep;

they could see nothing.

"It is a phantom," said Warren thoughtlessly.

The vessel was now drifting rapidly before the wind.

"She is at a danger point now," said Harold. "See the monstrous waves lashing together and grating upwards on either side. Those are the reefs, which if she touches, she is doomed immediately."

Every one stood almost breathless as they watched the vessel drifting between the threatening Scylla and Charybdis. In a few moments she had passed between

them and into the deep inner channel.

"And yet she is doomed, look at her water lines; she must be leaking badly," said Warren.

"She cannot last much longer," said Harold, "she

must soon sink."

"The derelict goes from one danger to another, as

usual," said Delnot.

From the point where the watchers were standing, there stretched out into the channel a vast stone breakwater. It was not at that time visible owing to the accumulated waters that the violence of the wind had heaped up on the shore, but over and around it the waves surged and massed with greater fury than elsewhere. This breakwater was constructed to protect the island from the invasions of destructive undercurrents, and now against it the waters dashed their concentrated forces as if determined first to overwhelm this strategic

obstacle and then easily to devour the yielding sands beyond. Against it all the mad currents seemed to be directed and toward it desolately and grimly floated the

now nearly submerged vessel.

"She is doomed again," said Harold, "she will strike the breakwater," and a few moments later with a tremendous shock, the steamer fell heavily upon the projecting rocks.

"It will soon be over," said Warren, "she must

soon go to pieces."

"Heavens," suddenly cried Delnot, "Harold you are right. There's a woman on board," as the white figure of a woman appeared aft.

By this time some of the attendants that had come from the city with Delnot and Warren had arrived.

"Come," said Harold, "we must rescue. There is some life saving apparatus and tackle at the house."

With the aid of willing and in some instances, dexterous hands, no time was lost in obtaining the apparatus, and in a little while longer it was duly planted, and such coils and tackle as they had were arranged for action.

By this time the vessel which had heaved broadside to the storm was thumping heavily against the rocks.

At the word the life line was shot out and with excellent aim fell amidship of the vessel, and was soon seized and began to be drawn in by the figure on board the wreck.

"Bravo," cried Warren, "Bravo. Hope and life

are couples."

"So are courage and danger, sometimes," said Delnot.

A large rope had been now drawn to the vessel and secured. But here the willing rescuers looked askance at each other.

"Where is the receptacle to be suspended on the ca-

ble to be drawn to the vessel?" asked Warren.

"There is none," said Harold.

"All is done that can be done, and we are no nearer

our object," said Warren, now greatly excited.

Harold motioned the figure to make firm the fastenings of the cable on board the ship, and in another moment and without a word of warning he dashed into

the raging waves.

With the aid of the rope he kept himself from being driven out of his course, and from being dashed into the rocks and undercurrents of the breakwater. With steady nerves, a firm heart and a smiling face that seemed to enjoy the wild gracefulness of the waves he breasted, Harold gradually drew nearer and nearer to the fated steamer. Presently he began to observe something familiar about the figure he was approaching, the curved outlines, the grace of motion and posture, the sweet smile as brave in the presence of danger as his own, and which now full of mutual recognition shone through the storm with the rays of a warmer sun than Saturn—this was Aphrodite. And his heart beat full and free as the strong arms drew him swiftly to the side of the sinking ship on whose deck he soon stood a conquering hero in the presence of the queen of love and beauty.

With a heaving bosom Aphrodite snatched his hand

and pressed it to her lips.

"Come Aphrodite," he said, "come with me."

"No," she replied, "my duty. Not before him."

And she pointed to the cabin below.

In a moment Harold had passed into the cabin and taking up the fainting invalid and bringing him upon his back like the ancient Aeneas, plunged with him into the yeasty billows. To leave him there was certain death, and he knew that Aphrodite was right and noble in her act, and that remonstrance would not avail. Terrible and slow was the passage on the return. Clinging to the helpless burthen of humanity, more than once the lives of both hung on the slenderest circumstance of

strength or nerve. But on, on, he prevailed till at last they were met by Delnot and Warren, who had at great danger come into the waves as far as possible to aid their friend and take his burden.

"O do not return," implored Warren.

"I must," gently replied Harold. And in a few moments he had begun again the perilous return to the ship.

It was evident to all that the ship must soon foun-

der and sink from view.

In a comparatively short time in view of the difficulties and circumstances, Harold had reached the ship, but with every moment the danger was visibly increas-

ing.

The mutual look of admiration that passed between these two singular persons as they beheld each other now standing on the very precipice of destruction, the mutual recognition of noble and divine qualities that made them superior to life and death itself, the sublime composure with which they towered over the storm, the raging ocean and the vessel sinking beneath their feet, was a strange commentary on the prejudices and sentiments that had fatally separated them.

For the first time Aphrodite thought she discerned in Harold's lingering eyes, the certain expression of love returned, and she felt then a thrill of pleasure un-

known to her before.

"Will we go?" asked Harold.

"Yes," she said.
"Then follow me."

"I will," she replied. And calmly they began their descent. Harold was not without hope. He had absolute confidence in Aphrodite's enduring nerve and strength, and if the vessel should survive long enough to maintain the seaward end of the cable he believed they should safely reach their destination. But the waves were as angry as ever and the storm blew with unabated fury, and the vessel seemed in the last throes

of dissolution. Surrounded by these dangers they had reached about the middle of the cable.

"Look yonder," said Warren, pointing seaward.

The terrified watchers beheld sweeping toward them from the bosom of the sea a vast and mountainous billow, rearing its darkened crest so far above the surrounding waste, that the rest of the ocean seemed to shrink beneath its omnivorous power. On, on, it came in stupendous grandeur, and instinctively they felt that the supreme moment had arrived. Crushing, foaming, hissing, it bore high upon its mountainous bosom in bold relief the vessel, the cable and its sacred freight of life. It broke upon the shore with a sullen roar of satisfaction. After it had subsided, there was nothing left for the eye to dwell on but the dreary waste of surging waters, flecked with the foam of retiring waves.

At the last moment Delnot caught sight of Aphrodite's face; it was turned toward Harold's, and was wreathed with an ineffable smile of tender happiness. The waves passed over them. "From the sea she sprung; to the sea she has returned," said Delnot sol-

emnly.

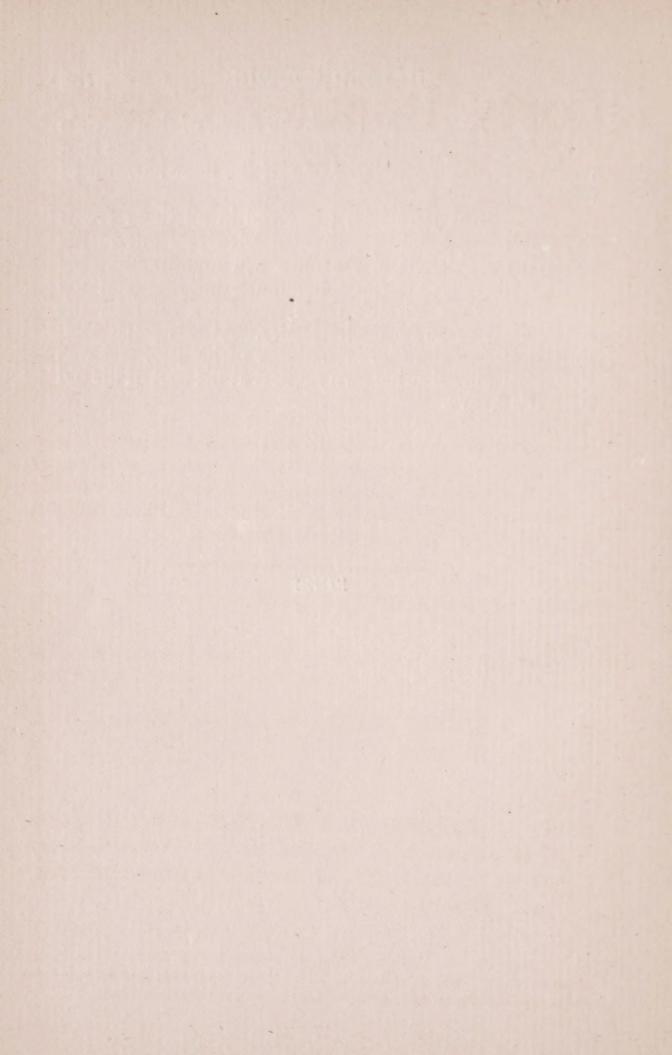
No human eye ever beheld those lovely forms again. The storm as if satisfied with its tragedy relented the next day, and the beautiful sun bathed in summer rays the peaceful island; but the ocean retained its treasures and it is possible that the Ocean God appeased in his wrath, when he came to behold the unutterable beauty of his victims, repented of his hasty violence and endowed them with divine life and caused them to dwell again in more than mortal happiness in that land—

"* * * * * * In the sunbright deep,
Where golden gardens glow,
Where the winds of the North becalmed in sleep
Their conk-shells never blow."

Willy never recovered from the shock of that terrible day, and a magnificent mausoleum now adorns the spot where rests the remains of one of the least harmful of mankind.

The faithful John who perceived in all these events the punishing hand of Providence, carried out to the letter the provisions of Harold's will found among his effects whereby Hillstone became a hospital and the treasures of the Pirate's Cave, became a fund for the benefaction of suffering humanity. At this place John tarried during the short remainder of his life, and was thereafter buried at his own request at the foot of his old master's grave.

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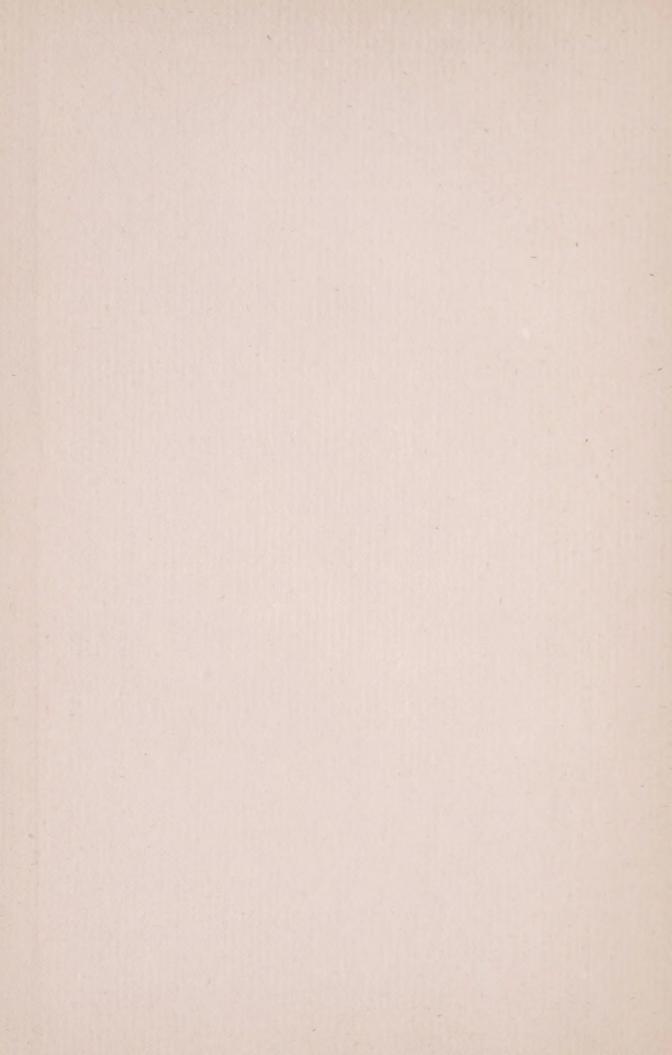
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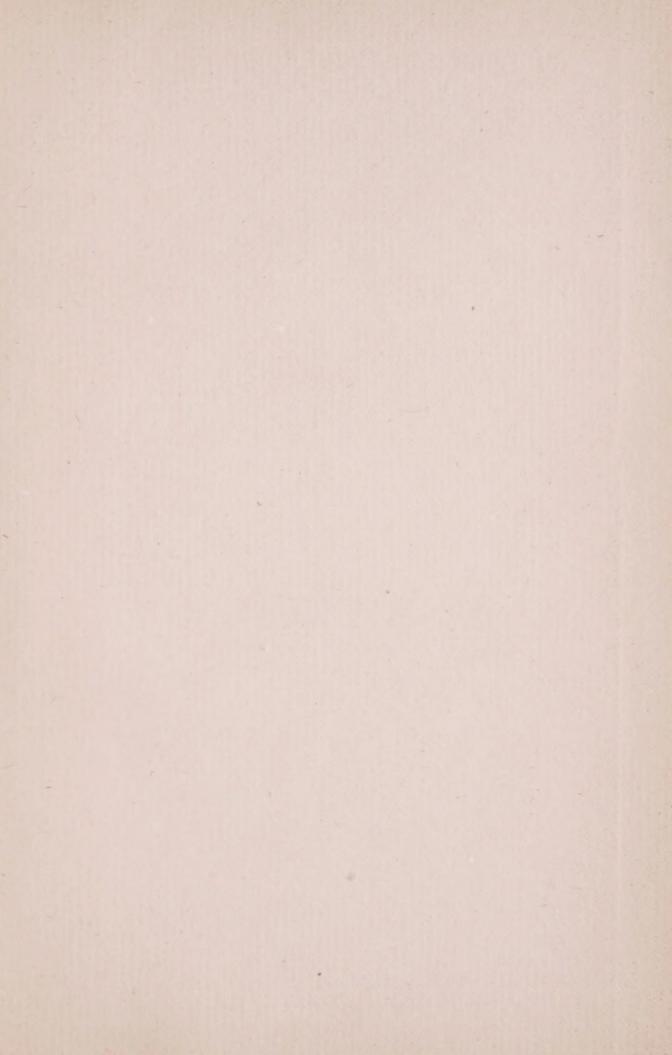
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